

A YOUNGER SON

By G. A. B. DEWAR



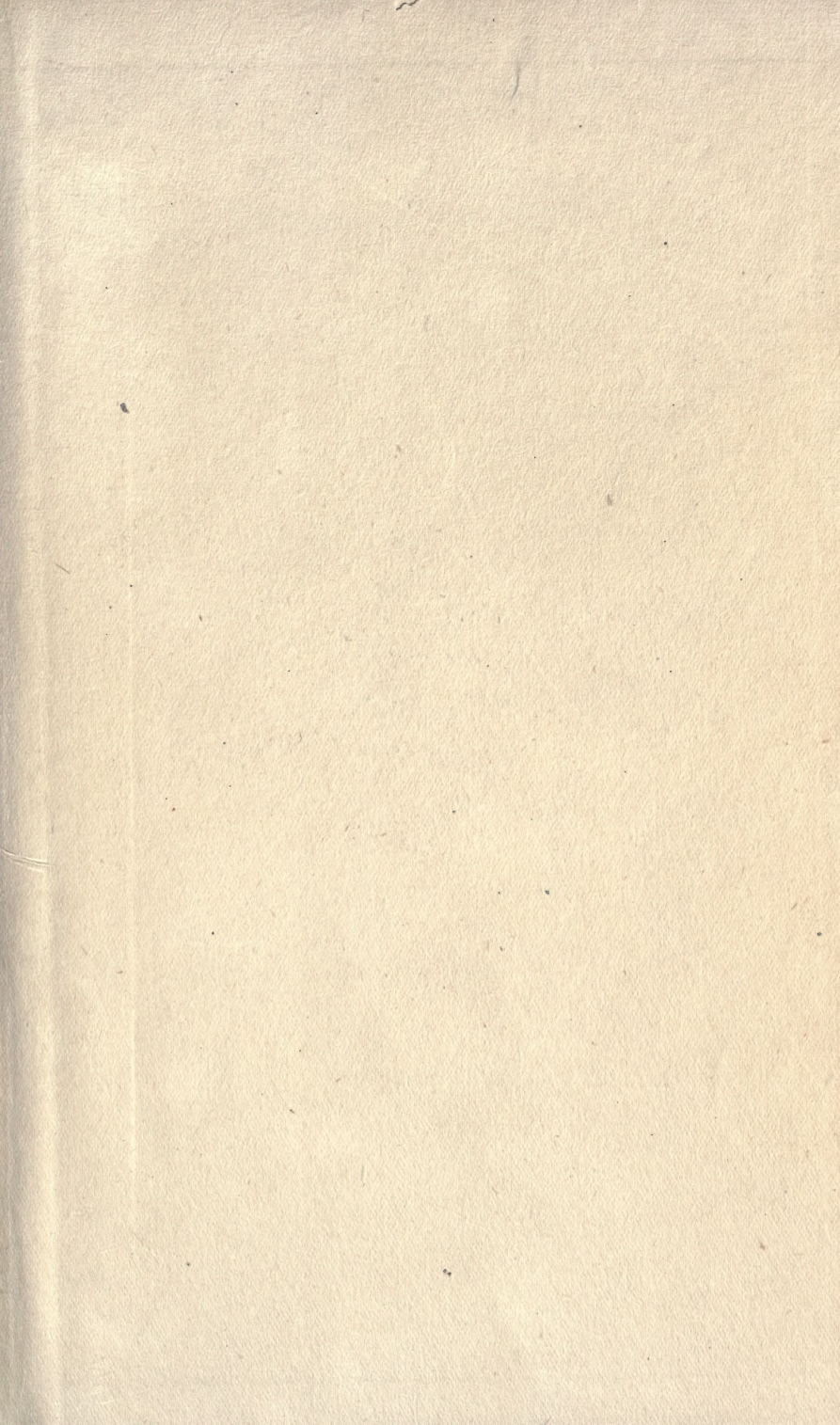
3 1761 04378 2804



Presented to the
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LIBRARY

by the
ONTARIO LEGISLATIVE
LIBRARY

1980





A YOUNGER SON



45611

A YOUNGER SON

HIS RECOLLECTIONS AND OPINIONS
IN MIDDLE AGE.

g. 13
D

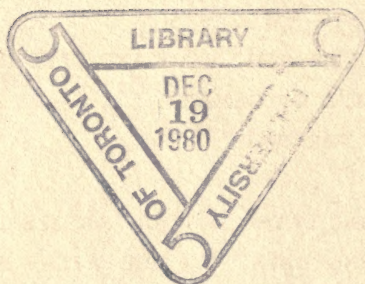
BY
GEORGE A. B. DEWAR

Author of
"This Realm This England," "The Leaning Spire,"
"The Airy Way," etc.

LONDON
GRANT RICHARDS LTD.
ST. MARTIN'S STREET
1920



TO THE MEMORY
OF
WILLIAM WRAY SKILBECK
MY LOYAL AND STEADFAST FRIEND



DA
577
D48

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	5
I THE ENCHANTED LAND	11
II THE PASSING OF THE OLD REGIME	30
III OXFORD	47
IV OXFORD (<i>Continued</i>)	63
V POLITICS AND JOURNALISM	78
VI POLITICS AND JOURNALISM (<i>Continued</i>)	125
VII WAR FRONTS AND BASES	151
VIII WITH THE FRENCH : VAUX AND VERDUN	173
IX THE BATTLE OF CAMBRAI	182
X ITALY IN THE WAR	194
XI ERIN	209
XII TRAVELLING DAYS : TO ITALY FOR ITS COLOUR	220
XIII TRAVELLING DAYS : TO THE ATLAS FOR ITS SPELL	241
XIV CIRCE AT TUNIS	261
XV TRAVELLING DAYS : TO THE ALPS FOR THEIR FLORA	267

INTRODUCTION

THIS is not "a war-book," but it has sprung out of the war, many of its earlier scenes and experiences having been recalled and dwelt on in the course of some thousands of miles of travel round the military fronts and munition bases, from 1916 to 1919. Often in the evenings, after an active day, I found myself trying to recall the life especially in the villages and woods and farms where my early years were spent; with its whimsical, affectionate figures, which touched me like the faded vignettes in an old album. The deeper back I glanced the more excellent those figures and their environment appeared to me. That may have been somewhat an effect of reaction from the tremendous drama I had been moving in during the day. Still, I feel that some of the country things really were wholesomer in, say, the 'seventies and early 'eighties than in 1914 or in 1919. The social life was sounder, I think, then; more natural. There was not the same ignoble scramble for money and show. Some of the old families were rather proud, and many of the villagers more dependent and poorer than to-day. Yet, there was something worth styling a social system in the countryside of that time. There were county families. There was a tradition. There was vigour. They were followed by week-enders; latterly, by the brazen traffic in land, with the poor who depend on it, as a mere personal chattel—by the evil spirit, too often, of "It's mine, I shall jolly well do what I like with it." That was a deplorable falling off.

Everything, during the last few years I have observed in war and working scenes, and thought over, tells me beyond doubt that there is to be a stark change in the English social system all round, alike in country, and city, and industrial centre. It will overwhelm a great deal of the selfish and narrow. I view that with entire satisfaction and hope. I feel we have a noble chance of emerging from the ordeal a fresher and safer people than we were in 1914. But there are features, in the English country life at least, which I should wish to save. I should like to conserve in the main what is left of the old-family tradition, and of the sweetness and light of the two old Universities, Oxford and Cambridge. True, there is not much of the old-family tradition left. But it will be a pity if what still lingers bravely is swept away in the inundation. The tradition of the Wiltshire Longs,

Devonshire Aclands, Buckinghamshire Verneys, not to mention the greatest "territorialist" houses, has been a good one in national life. I should wish to see it conserved, even if we decided to socialize or nationalise the bulk of our system. This is not wholly a matter of sentiment, for in hard practice the tradition made for the good and happiness of country classes generally. I admit there are reservations and exceptions to be made, though I am not sure we should speedily find any arrangement to better it in practice. However, in large part it is a matter of sentiment. But, then, without sentiment we shall reform in vain. We shall start to pile up a crass, utilitarian building, that makes no appeal to the soul of man. We shall miss immeasurably the finer side of reconstruction. Blockheads deride sentiment. They want something tangible, they tell you. They want the "stuff"—"none of your poetry and namby pamby nonsense." But blockheads miss the fact that the whole war on the Entente side has been fought for sentiment. It has not been a war for "stuff." Everything good in the war, every act of sacrifice, has been an act of sentiment. Sentiment ought to play a mighty part in the coming reconstruction of the country; we ought to have it in full measure, brimming over—provided it be of the right kind.

So, decidedly I should like to keep what remains of that old-family tradition in which I was brought up. The old English families have tried to look after their folk and the villages. They have made some bad mistakes. Long before now, they ought to have settled a great number of villagers on the land as freeholders or secure tenants; they should have done this largely through the State whilst they had the Parliamentary power. Moreover, they have suffered themselves far too often and long to be tied to party. But they have regarded their estates as trusts not chattels. That was a great merit; and in any scheme of death-duties and taxation, in any drastic re-arrangement of wealth—designed to remove glaring, perilous inequalities between incomes—I should, frankly, like to see this small, valuable class tenderly treated. Also, I would take the strictest precautions against the libraries and art treasures of their estates passing out of the country. It should be instantly made a grave offence to sell a first folio of Shakespeare, for instance, or a painting by Reynolds or Gainsborough, out of the country. Equally, the old Universities have deserved well of the nation. They were splendid in the war, volunteering virtually to a man at the outset, like the old families; and all through dark ages they have been a safe home of the humanities. The Universities have made their mistakes, too. They have been obstinately partisan. They have forgotten that they were founded to be national Universities, not the preserves of the fortunate. In the reconstruction, we ought to conserve them for the sake of culture—but open them more to the masses of the people. They have really been closed to the masses.

Except to the iconoclast or to the Gradgrinds and Bounderbys,

who care for none but gross, material considerations, there is nothing conflicting between the preservation of such traditions and a great national reconstruction. That reconstruction is bound to come. It starts through the ferment in the labour world, but it will, and it ought, to extend to many sides of national life besides that of hours, profits and control of industry. The industrial workers in the factories and on the land are the vast bulk of the population, and they have the political power at last in their hands. But they are not the only class of workers to be considered in the readjustment of the social and economic system. This is a fact which their spokesmen are apt to overlook. There is a class exclusiveness about many of the speeches of those leaders, and a suggestion of coming ascendancy, which is brutal and ungenerous. The wage of the manual workers has been too low, the hours too high. That is indisputable. Every intelligent man admits it, or knows it. But it is equally true that the status of intellectual and artistic endeavour has been a deplorably low one. Science, art, literature, three great agents of civilization, have been told from time immemorial to shift for themselves, to pick up a precarious livelihood as best they can in the scrimmage which the thoughtless and brutal are fond of describing as "the survival of the fittest by natural selection." Of course there is no such principle as Darwin's at work in our social system. In numberless cases, the least fitted, in the interests of civilization and progress, to survive, do so in the modern scrimmage, often because they start with great advantages; with large blocks of money, to which neither their intelligence nor character entitles them; with name, influence, and other powerful levers. There cannot be a "survival of the fittest" test under such conditions.

Again, the rewards of the commercial and non-creative intelligence are out of all proportion larger and more abundant than those of art, literature, invention. The creative side of industry is the worker's. The brain work of those who conduct that industry is non-creative: it organizes, watches and directs the real creators. The man or woman who produces a work of art or literature, or who makes a scientific invention, is clearly creative; yet, with rare exceptions, the rewards for such work are contemptible, compared with those of commercial management. There is much talk about the need of getting an A1 instead of a C3 population. Some reformers think this can be done by re-housing and transport Acts! But we shall never get any but a low C3 average — intellectually and morally — so long as we spurn science, literature and art, by (1) suffering them to struggle for recognition and a bare living wage in the modern welter, in which many of the best, intellectually, go under, whilst many of the least useful to the State and civilization survive; (2) granting far larger rewards to the non-creative and business capacity than to the creative and intellectual one. Cannot the Prime Minister see this? One used to find him imaginative and sympathetic in his

less imposing days. If we are to search into national life, and reorganize thoroughly, here is a great and neglected field.

The labour question, then, the alteration in the relations of labour and capital, is only one side of national reconstruction. But it is, of course, a very great one. Labour is bent on forcing the pace in the manufacturing industries, and shortly we shall see a corresponding impetus in regard to the land. The country workers are sure to follow the town ones. In 1918 I spent a great deal of time in studying the labour conditions and temper in many parts of the country : in shipyards, factories, workshops of all descriptions. The ferment I witnessed there left me in no doubt that an immense change in the whole labour and capital system is coming swiftly. The wage and hire system of 1914 throughout all the great industries will be swept away as completely as the feudal system.

CHAPTER I

THE ENCHANTED LAND

THE enchanted carpet would have a rarer magic for me, had it carried its possessor back to the age of childhood. To transport us in a flash from this clime to that, one end of the earth to the other, were no such boon. Air-ships may end by doing something of that kind, railways appeared to do so to the imagination of the villager seventy or eighty years ago. After all, the annihilation of space by speed is a doubtful blessing. The soul of man is not necessarily larger, his imagination not more kindling, because he has exchanged the stage-coach for the non-stopping express. The Roman was right—*coelum non animum mutant qui trans mare current*. But a carpet to take us a brief trip into the future, or back into the past, that would be a treasure worth conjuring with! Some would choose the future. I should try the past. We may end by going forward and being in touch with the marvels that are to be. That is at least imaginable. Immortality of the soul imagines it somewhat. But no man ever conceived the possibility of going back.

Childhood, for many of us—its profound troubles and its high-thoughted joys—was magical; what more natural than that we should treasure a carpet which promised to carry us thither? As it is, we depend on that jumble, memory—whimsical, inconsequent, often defective over matters, above all over the ghost faces and forms, we most desire to summon up. My memory is fairly retentive, about the average one. But, of those

figures of childhood I should like to recall clearly, I have been able to get a lifelike view of only one for perhaps half-a-minute; and the agent which helped me, though I had not asked for, and at the time did not desire such a glimpse, was not memory so much as illness. During illness—the doctor named it neurasthenia—I awoke one morning, and, it being near full daylight, saw in the room, and facing me, the chief figure of my world of childhood.

Here was not only a case of the dead returning, but returning in the dress exactly, and with the expression, the whole body and carriage, of twenty-nine or thirty years ago.

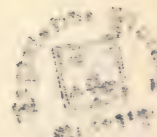
I started up, stared and then, slowly, this amazing counterfeit vanished.

I have not a belief in real visible ghosts, though the woods of my youth were haunted, according to immemorial local tradition, haunted by a Lady Powlett, sometimes seen driving in a red cloak along the old turnpike road between Sarum and Newbury; and as a child, I imagined a glimpse or two of her in the moonlight there. She used to dive into the pond by the freeholders' common. If I honestly held with ghosts, I should, I think, take Wandering Willie's tale in "Redgauntlet" for truth—it is so finely done! Yet, here was this extraordinary phenomenon. *I saw it*; I did not merely think I saw it. I suppose what I saw was a mirage, the production of illness and mental strain. But the mirage in nature is a poor, colourless thing compared with that. I have seen mirages in the Desert of Sahara—they are nothing. My mirage presented with absolute fidelity the human figure, pulsing with live blood, capable of sympathy. It began in sleep, no doubt, but I was awake before it faded. I could then with pen and paper have written down details, all perfectly true, of the living person of thirty years ago, details which later that day would have eluded me. Even an author, however, does not want to play the part of Captain Cuttle towards the dead, and "when found take a note of" instantly. One may snapshot a

torpedoed vessel as she sinks with her human cargo ; jotting down in one's note book a vanishing spirit would be a little too profane.

As we cannot count on mirages of the past, we have to trust to memory's efforts. They are fragments, never completely satisfying, but they fascinate me. During the last three years I have seen wonderful acts in the drama of the war. I have entered Verdun in the light of a full moon shining on the sparkling snow and icicles. I have seen the sun rising as I left Vaux Fort, and walked over its terrible plateau, and again and again I have seen the sun rising over the old Somme battle-fields and illumine the ghastly, glorious Butte de Warlincourt, as I passed from Albert to Bapaume. Most wonderful of all, I have seen the sun sink molten fire behind lamp-black Alps and golden maize fields, during the fighting on the Isonzo and the Carso. I have watched the phantasmagory of three great battles going forward in 1916 and 1917. To-day I had rather, for magic and wonderment, be able to recall, distinct and clear-cut, the scenes and drama, harrowing and happy, of childhood.

My early years were spent deep in a great wood, mainly oak timber and hazel underwood, on the range of chalk hills that run along north-west Hampshire. The house stood in the midst of the wood, shut off from the landscape by rising ground to the north and east, but looking south-west on a long line of undulating violet-hued hills and downs—Quarley Camp, Danebury, and Perham Down, camps so-called of prehistoric England, real camps and training grounds now, where all day, and often after dark, the aeroplanes drone and "zoom" overhead. The spirit of this home was rather militarist. Officer's sword and red sash hung in the hall by the front door, and among our toys at an early stage was a brace of old army pistols. I think we ended by losing them in the wood. There were engravings of Buonaparte—one of which I prize to-day, Charles Turner's mezzotint after Phillips' picture of the First Consul—Wellington, Cromwell—his arm in a sling,



charging at Marston Moor—and Charles I. One was slightly embarrassed as to which side to take—should it be Cromwell's, Charles's? Cromwell was such a strong man of the sword! But were not those Puritans gloomy figures, spoil-sports in field pursuit with hound, gun or rod? Besides, family legendry and sentiment counted. Were not Charles' armies led at Edgehill by an ancestor of ours, Earl of Lindsay, descendant of that earlier, famed Willoughby named Bellator Egregius? So we went in for the Cavaliers, who with Carnarvon and Falkland spilt their blood for Charles on the field of Newbury over the chalk ridge to the north-east of the wood, the highest chalk in England. I had some reservations, later, as to Cromwell, and could not quite see him merely in the light of Cowley's description of a great bird of prey: Carlyle's "Hero Worship," for one thing, had laid hold of me. But I do not go back on John Paulet, Marquis of Winchester, who held Basing House; still less on the great Montrose.

So we were militarists; and, later, when Russia scared us all, of course we were little jingoes. I for one never recanted our miniature militarism, and do not mean to, if I live to see the federation of the world.

We played with adorable tin soldiers. The shops in Ryde—where we used to go for change of air when we did not go to Havre or Boulogne, Brighton or Hastings—were alluring with their rows of fresh-painted Household Guards and Grenadiers; and there was one shop even in our own little country town, Andover, which decked out the toy soldier about Christmas time. I should like to hear or read Mr. Hilaire Belloc on this theme of miniature militarism. He could do it through poetry or prose better than anyone else. My feeling is that these toys were good. I should have liked to play with them more; rather a costly pastime, however, like buying from the London naturalist shops the reputed British-laid egg of Savi's warbler or the honey buzzard.

But in 1870 we had a taste of the live thing. My earliest recollections of any public event, military or

civil, is the news of Saarbrücken—and, after that, seeing the Emperor Napoleon lying in state at Chiselhurst. I don't remember the declaration of war, but distinctly I remember one morning early in August, 1870, the news coming to us that the French had won a great victory over the Prussians, at which the Prince Imperial had received his "baptism of fire." The postman, Joe Wells, had brought it in advance of "The Standard." I can recall him to-day on his rounds, a one-armed man. And, a friend reminding me of it, I can just recall his pony trap. Joe drove on gamely into the 'Nineties, all weathers, his one arm at times half frozen among those hills of snow and cutting winds. At the breakfast table to which the news was brought, our two Italian cousins, their mother the Marchesa Talia-carne, and their French tutor Monsieur Sordet, were merrily crowded with us five English. I wish Sordet would appear to me in a mirage. He was a mountain of flesh. I suspect he was not quite as gigantic as our neighbourhood liked to represent, but he would have cut a respectable figure in the fat woman's booth at Weyhill* Fair on pleasure day.

It was on good evidence that the village carrier had in self-defence to charge him double fare, a shilling, to the market town and back.† The story that Sordet's white waistcoat was charged extra rate by the village laundress, was probably false, though the libel was popular among us.

Everyone at that breakfast table on, I think, August 3rd, is dead, save myself. We exulted in the smashing defeat of the Prussians, for the house was pro-French. We despised German sausages. Disillusion came a few days later when Saarbrücken was seen in its true light; and with disillusion, so far as I am concerned, came darkness; I remember nothing much else about the Franco-Prussian War. That scene alone lights up,

* Weydon Priors, of Thomas Hardy's "The Mayor of Casterbridge," where the husband put up his wife to auction. The glory of the fair in October has faded. The merchandise was chiefly hops and sheep—often pronounced "shep" in our benighted district.

† The carrier in much later days had a rigid rule: "Quality drives up the hill; t'others walk." Sordet was made to walk.

strangely clear-cut. For the rest I must go to the histories, a pale substitute.

Two years later we were intensely militarist. There was an Army march-past, closing with a dashing cavalry charge, on Beacon Hill, by Salisbury Plain. I became a devotee to cavalry. We were all for the cavalry, they were so smart. So when, years later, I discovered Kinglake's "History of the Crimean War," I pored over the story of Nolan, of Cardigan the "rigid hussar," of Scarlett and the Charge of the Heavy Brigade, till I had the whole passages by heart. I can't shake off the cavalry tradition—the spectacle at Beacon Hill in the summer of 1872 was too much for me! The next occasion on which I was greatly stirred by cavalry in proud array was on the Somme; waiting, near Carnoy, and hoping for a great chance. Then the French cavalry at Péronne one day; and, best of all, English cavalry in noble column trotting past Trescault, on November 21st, 1917, across the Hindenburg Lines, and winding round and disappearing to the right of Ribécourt. I had just come on foot out of that village which the Germans retired from the day before; and I had enjoyed a pleasure which carried me back towards our 'seventies in Hampshire. A German rifleman concealed in some ruin or dug-out, which had not been quite cleared in the rush of the opening day of the battle, sniped at me and two companions from a distance of not over a hundred yards, and clean missed us.

Now, that was a touch of the enchanted world of boyhood. It beat Fennimore Cooper, and "The Wilds of Africa." But when, a few minutes later, mounting the hill towards Trescault, I met the cavalry pouring across the main Hindenburg Line, and splashing me all over with the churned-up mud, it was nearly as good as Beacon Hill again.

It is the vogue, by the way, among people in the arm-chair to write off cavalry in up-to-date war. Tanks below and aeroplanes above were to make this arm obsolete. Cambrai confirmed their view—though the French and the Germans had cavalry there. It was even suggested

that Haig should put his cavalry into the infantry. Thus from the armchair, we were to solve the problem of "More Men!" But the horseman is a very old arm in war, like the sail in admiralty, and in this war we have fallen back on more than one old arm. It has been "a war of aircraft and tanks." Yes; I know something of tanks myself, have seen them made from iron ore upwards, and I saw one of the very first tanks a day after it was put out of action on the Somme, September, 1916: but it has been a war, too, of grenades and hand-flung bombs. I looked one day through the museum of a hard-fighting, hard-thinking Brigadier-General in Picardy. It consisted of weapons taken from the enemy in various battles and raids; and a number of them looked as if they might have been collected before the Battle of Blenheim. Yet, here were the latest devices of the German Army—which had specialised somewhat in up-to-date warfare.

Besides, what of the British cavalry at Hangard Wood among several places, when the Germans were at the zenith in their rush during the Spring of 1918? What of Allenby's men in Palestine? The horseman is not to be ruled so cavalierly out of modern armies. Who knows—he may even find a niche for himself when the League of Nations polices the earth.

Beacon Hill in 1872 drew the countryside. Smock-frocks came to our pageant from ten miles around, and the great territorialists, the lords of the manors, the squires came, too. "The County" meant something in those days. The Sir Aylmer Aylmers could still bask in their Aylmerism. The Prince of Wales rode over from Aldershot to Amport to be entertained against to-morrow's event by the premier Marquis. It had been a hot day, a long dusty ride, the Prince was thirsty. A brandy and soda was brought out to him before he dismounted. "In those times," somebody remarked to a member of the Paulet family lately in recounting the incident, "it was worth being a Prince. He kept his Crown, and could get a drink. Nowadays, he has a good chance of losing both." That Marquis of Win-

chester was a renowned north Hampshire worthy. It was reported that on account of his country clothes, he was sometimes taken for, addressed as, a farmer or farmer labourer. If so, he had his will, for agriculturist is what he set out to be. He was of the earth, earthy.

Though a most loyal gentleman, the Marquis made no pretence to courtiership. He did not alter his working country clothes or put them away even during the royal visit. He went to bed at his usual hour, and plainly asked the Prince to excuse him as an early riser who had an estate to pull round. Next morning, Prince and staff waited for the carriage to take them to Beacon Hill. No carriage appeared. Time began to press; the Prince asked when would the carriage be ready? Whereupon he learnt there was none. The only carriage in use at Amport had already started, carrying its owner. The Prince, preplexed, asked how then was he to reach Beacon Hill? It was suggested, as the only practical proposition, that he should ride. But he did not know the way, and his staff did not know the way. In the end, the difficulty was got over by a school-boy offering to guide the party on his pony. The schoolboy was to be premier Marquis himself one day, the present head of the family.

The cavalry charge over, smock frocks trudged back to thatched hamlets, and the county and its camp followers harnessed horses and returned, after the great picnic to their "seats" and "residences." Many of the carriages looked proud and fine to our eyes then, and many of the horses were proud and fine. I can dimly see them scattered over the crisp turf of the glorious down. The pony-shay element touches one's fancy rather than the waggonette,* or the yellow and black broughams. Those pony-shays seemed such light, almost fairy-like, vehicles. Our new shay, bought perhaps at Stride's in Andover, I thought a perfect beauty. Titania and Oberon would have looked well

* I am new-fashioned enough to spell it with a double g. We have had enough, during the last fifteen years, of "wagons." Years ago I did some articles for Mr. (now Sir) C. A. Pearson. To my astonishment I found my "waggon" printed "wagon," and I learned from him that the way to

in it. But now I have my suspicions, for this reason : chancing to be in Salisbury on Sunday years ago, I thought I would like to drive my companion over to Amesbury and show her the Altar Stone. I went to get a dog cart, but, after trying several inns in vain, was reduced to coaxing a blacksmith to hire me his vehicle and pony. We started for Stonehenge, and rather a disagreeable thing happened. There were groups of boys and men, donkey-stands they are named locally, about the town and villages around ; these loons called attention to us, guffawed at our expense. My companion did not mind this at all ; women of the right sort are braver than men in such matters. I rather hated it, and tried to be unconscious of the donkey-stands, and failed. When we unharnessed near Stonehenge, I viewed the shay closely as well as at a distance, and I felt the loons were right. That shay was irresistibly absurd. It might be likened roughly to half-a-dozen bone-shakers of the antique, extremely heavy build plus a prehistoric perambulator or two.

I have travelled in a milkcart, I have travelled behind a hearse, I have been on a boneshaker, and have tumbled off a 60-inch bicycle, with one ridiculous tiny wheel and one huge wheel, and many a glorious ride have I enjoyed in childhood in the carrier's cart. I have sculled in boats where to feather the oars would be a piece of disgusting affectation. But never have I felt the sense of personal remorse I felt when I critically overlooked that shay and acknowledged that I had driven a pretty woman in it fully ten miles in the broad light of day.

How I managed to face the band going home, I cannot tell. The ludicrous thing must have weighed the best part of a ton. We had no right to cross slender

spell it was with one g. I have an old personal regard and respect for Sir C. A. Pearson, who has come a good man and true out of the war. But we spelt "waggon" with two g's, and I do. I feel sure "The Heir at Law" would have spelt it with one, and we know how badly he spelt and wrote. There are certain peculiarities in journalism, and out of it, which I have never been able to adapt myself to. For example. I do not in the least understand what the expression, "a stunt," means—though I admit that is good military slang—and the expression, "a story," in regard to, say, the account of a battle, a boatrace, the proceedings of a company's annual meeting, or a debate in Parliament, remains strange to me.

bridges or causeways in it. I was fit to curse the Altar Stone. And yet, the pretty woman, the prettiest and best I ever have known, was not a bit put about. She patted the old pony—it was about thirty years of age, with a mouth of fossilized leather—and said she liked these dear things; and to this day she recalls “the lovely drive” we had over the grand Plain. “A ministering angel, thou!”

I think it probable that that shay was a relict of the great march past.

Beacon Hill went to sleep, militarily, after the cavalry picnic. In those days, Tedworth, Amesbury, and Ludgershall had ordinarily no concern with war. We had volunteers, we had yeomanry, and we chaffed about them as irreverently as we chaffed about the average music in our north Hampshire churches, which was bad, and about the sermons, which were worse because longer. It was a shooting country, not a fighting; a first-class fishing one, too, with its Test and Anton; but the Tedworth Hounds were bound to be famous, because they descended from Assheton Smith. Everybody interested in sport has heard of that squire with his iron will, and on occasions his terribly hard, though not ungenerous fist. I have often thought that a meeting and a debate on horseback between him and William Cobbett, a persistent frequenter of our village between the years 1821 and 1826, would have proved exciting. They would have cordially hated one another, socially and politically. Yet there were features in common between them. Cobbett, not less than the squire, was a man. He was a sportsman, too, though he was for a hare rather than a foxhunt. The only sportsman I knew well who had hunted with the Tedworth constantly when Assheton Smith was Master was the village butcher, Osborne. He understood horse as well as ox flesh, and dealt in some good hunters in his day. His own mount always appeared to us an old crock. It was slow, and no one could imagine a fencer in it. Still, its rider, a master in venerie, contrived to see a surprising amount of the day's sport, in, at any

rate, our deep-wooded country. He could easily recall the day when the "rides" through our wood were cut for Assheton Smith, and I am not sure he could not tell at first hand the famous story of how the Master once dismounted and put up his fists to a powerful bully who defied him.

Osborne believed, naturally, in red meat. Seeing the curate pass his shop one day, looking peaky and anaemic, he remarked musingly, "Wants butcher's meat." Osborne believed in John Bull and beef, and he looked it.

But here I wish to guard myself against misinterpretations. There are men; and there are strapping specimens of masculinity who look the part and talk it. This war has uncovered the latter type. In the years before the war, and for a year or so after it started, the sham John Bull type was an effective figure. He talked about virility. It was his cult. He believed in all boys being sent to school early, and getting milk-sop proclivities knocked out of them. He held by good living—which he practised—and sound common-sensible thinking. He hated, like Josiah Bounderby, "sentimental nonsense" about the working classes—whom he wanted to see put in their right places—and he was for plain business methods. He was Spartan in his attitude towards sickly people, and was for the survival of the fittest. In fact, all round, he looked, talked, carried himself like a man who would shape well in war. But this type of strong man has sometimes cut an indifferent figure in the war. It is remarked that those weights he was fond of lifting and swinging on the public stage have turned out to be bladders. Ben Jonson was right on the mark—

"It is not growing like a tree,
In bulk, doth make man better be."

On the other hand, how many a "sentimentalist" and sickly-looking anaemic specimen that was his aversion, has gone down, a hero, in France, or worked, a giant, in factory and shipyard at home! We should

be on guard in future against the robustious gentleman, who calls for horse-sense and objects to all sentimental nonsense.

There is, in regard to this, a story which is, anyhow, *bon trovato*. Two soldiers, home in London on leave after the tremendous struggle over Passchendael, noted a stalwart civilian of the type, setting forth on his day's toil, and carrying one of those leathern dispatch cases we all possessed, without which, apparently, the war could not have been fought. Said one of the soldiers good-humouredly to the other :

"Look at 'im, Bill—there 'e goes, a-carrying of his b——y reticule !"

"The military" and the fox-hunt were only one's occasional excitements in those days. I never shaped as a young Nimrod. Our stable was restricted. But I used to go out on my Welsh pony when the Tedworth Hounds met at or near the wood—out of which, by the way, a cunning old fox would rarely emerge into the open, whether the earths had or had not been stopped overnight. Still, though I never properly was blooded, I would like to have some of those pony rides again. On the north side, the wood ended abruptly in a steep beech-tree hanger or hanging. There was an open, thymy expanse at either side of the beech trees, one expanse being known as "Mount Pleasant," so steep it was hard to walk down on foot ; and we usually ended in a run and the chance of a tumble at the bottom in the rough field or among heaps of rotten flints. My pony would walk down this steep, sure-footed, with me on his back, though at the steepest part I was liable to slip, saddle and all, on to his neck, and save myself an amusing tumble by grasping his wiry mane. I never came clean off whilst descending that hanger. My pony made a rule of not bolting there. He seemed to think he was on his honour then. At other times he often bolted, got his head down, and I was done ; I had to wait till he stopped. Sometimes I was flung in the wood and fields, once or twice on the high-road when he shied or bucked ; and once I could not get

my left foot out of the stirrup, and was dragged fifty yards along a bit of sward by the road up the lovely, wild valley, between Hurstbourne Tarrant and the hamlet of Netherton. That did shake me for five minutes or so, but it was all in the day's delight.

Why didn't one break one's neck in those absurdly reckless, safe, days, and have done with it? Why didn't one get shot in the thickets of the common and wood when out rabbit-shooting and ferreting? Falling off trees whilst bird-nesting, off ladders, off ponies, off walls, crashing on the ice whilst skating and sliding—yet, nothing ever happened but a bruise or a barked leg! Why wasn't one stung to death by wasps?—"wopsies," the Hampshire people call them. We used to dig down to their nests with a spade, and, when they came out in a rage, beat them with branches. Such things were simple and safe in the enchanted land of the child. Why not later in the prosaic world of the man?

One passed through a barrage of perils, and came out scratched all over, bruised and earthy, but all alive and tremendously happy. Bees' stings were the most annoying. One of us got badly stung under the eye by infuriated bees. There was a cry for the blue bag. In the confusion a glue pot was brought instead, and applied, and the eye was closed for some little time after as a result of the mixture of bee poison and glue. It was all in the day's fun.

Of the very early excitements, bird-nesting stood first. The first thing I can remember in the world was being taken to Enham Place—peopled now with soldiers learning to make baskets and to type-write—and shown my first blackbird's nest in an ivied stump by the roadside palings. It was marvellous. The first thing I can remember *distinctly* was being taken up the Church track through the wood to an oak. One of the cowboys struck the tree with his stick; I can hear to-day the sound it made. Out dashed a kestrel. I can see that cowboy and hear him *swarming* up that tree, and fetching down in his mouth the red-speckled eggs,

hard-set : I believe I have one of them to-day. That cowboy had always been a hero in my sight—and it happens he really is a hero in character. He was the nimblest boy, and is the straightest man, I ever met.

Shooting, riding, and ferreting, wasp-beating, bird-nesting and butterfly-chasing could not be indulged in all day, every day. There came soaking, stormy days, and the long evenings of autumn and winter to be filled up indoors. I filled up many of them in the lumber room, which contained several boxes full of books for which there was no room on the shelves of our study downstairs. These boxes of Pandora had never been unpacked since they reached the remote home in the great wood ten years and more before. I plunged into them haphazard, and drew forth English, French, German literature. Among the English books in the lumber rooms and the study cupboards downstairs were Landor's "Conversations," with his poems at the end in small type and double column; Walton's "Compleat Angler"; Percy's "Reliques" (three little red Moxon volumes); Johnson's "Lives of the British Poets"; Boswell's "Life of Johnson"; Emerson's Essays; Scott; Dickens; Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress"; William Howitt's "Homes and Haunts of the British Poets," and his "Country Life"; Aytoun's "Lays"; Evelyn's "Sylva"; Macaulay's History of England; White's "Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne"; Creasy's "Decisive Battles of the World"; Wordsworth and Campbell.

I was soon deep in many of the lumber-room books, understanding a little of some, less of others. There were sundry volumes of sermons, but those I skipped entirely—with the German and French. From time to time, haphazard additions were made to my book store. My first tutor gave me, haphazard, when I was barely in my teens, a stout little copy of Shelley's Poems, including "Prometheus Unbound"; my third tutor, apparently on the strength of this, read with me, haphazard, on summer days on the lawn, Æschylus' "Prometheus Bound." Thinking of it soberly now,

I perceive it was all haphazard—no system in my reading, next to none in “lessons.” Æschylus ere I had mastered the simplest Greek! “The Witch of Atlas” at an age when the average schoolboy is, or was, devoted to “Chums,” or at most “Robinson Crusoe”! However, there is the fact that I did rejoice in—without mastering—Greek tragedy, and did rejoice in—without fully understanding—Shelley’s Lyrics and portions of “Queen Mab.” In literature and in lessons I was simply Topsy—I grewed.

Wordsworth’s “Excursion” came a year or two after Shelley and Greek tragedy. I did understand, at least I much enjoyed, portions of that; and felt myself in those lines:—

“He, many an evening, to his distant home
In solitude returning, saw the hills
Grow larger in the darkness; all alone
Beheld the stars come out above his head,
And travelled through the wood with no one near
To whom he might confess the things he saw.

So the foundations of his mind were laid.
In such communion, not from terror free,
While yet a child, and long before his time,
Had he perceived the presence and the power
Of greatness.”

Before the close of the seventies, however, I had left Wordsworth and settled down on Shelley, for the lyrics in “Prometheus” and “Hellas” exercised a spell over me. Various short poems I had by heart, such as “Swiftly walk o’er the western wave,” and “Love’s Philosophy.”

There is no going back on Shelley after early years of devotion to his muse. After Shelley, even Swinburne is “as water unto wine.” But there is returning to Wordsworth, all the same: and I believe his “Excursion” may prove the purest anodyne for the restless heart of to-day that we can turn to in all English

literature. I visited for the first time Wordsworth's Lake Country in January, 1918, saw Dove Cottage, and the graves of the master and of Edward Quillinan at Grassmere. The place, happily, was deserted. I was the solitary pilgrim ; and I felt the worth of Wordsworth as I had not felt for many a year. We want more Wordsworth in our lives. His poetry is an antidote to everything anxiously mean and acquisitive and flurried in our lives. We want his iron calm. I saw on the counterpane of Wordsworth's bed these words worked : " We live by admiration, hope, and love." If Wordsworth was right, we have hardly learned to live.

I think there must have been an " Elia " among this treasure trove of the lumber room, for I seem to have known " Elia " from childhood, but I cannot place it, somehow. My bookshelf to-day has " Elia," 1st and 2nd series, 1835, and Charles Lamb's Poems, 1836—both, of course, Moxon's, but they were picked up at old book shops many years later for a few shillings apiece. I can recall the exact shade of blue in which Boswell's " Johnson " was bound in two volumes, though I have not seen the book for an age. Also I recall the binding and small print, and frontispiece of the Beaumont and Fletcher, though I never read a line of it, for some reason. I have tried Beaumont and Fletcher lately, and have struggled through a play of Rowe's—with no success ; the first failure, I suppose, is deplorable, but the second, I feel to be meritorious. Bacon and Burnet and Bossuet were there—for there was no sort of order among the books, it was a hotchpotch of literature. Bossuet did not take me, though I had my mother's word for it he was the greatest preacher who ever lived. I did not study Bossuet. Burnet also I neglected, but Bacon's " Essays " I absorbed. Crabbe's " Village " I could not manage, though I tasted it later.

Now, whether it was from all this highly irregular reading,* or from living a lonely, brooding life in the

wood, and seeing not much of schoolboys of my own age, or whether it was from some physical defect, I know not—but it is a fact that one day I began to think, and, what was worse, to think of religious matters ; of the dreadful why and whence and whither of myself and other people, though chiefly of myself. Was it from reading “Queen Mab” too early in life? I don’t think “Queen Mab” was the cause, or Shelley the cause.

It is true that, two or three years before, I lit in “Queen Mab” on the passage, “The Incarnate came, humbly he came, veiling his horrid godhead,” etc., and that, being religious—though by no means strictly orthodox—at the time, I had pasted over this page in my copy of the book. However, Shelley had nothing to do with it when one day out of doors it flashed upon me: “The Bible mayn’t be true!” Whatever the cause, I shall never blame—

“‘Fairy,’ the spirit said,
And on the Queen of Spells
Fixed her ethereal eyes.”

I visited hell ; and I discovered it a gloomy place, not even lit with flames. We have read a great deal about hell during this war—especially, perhaps, from people who talk and write at a discreet distance from its portals. My impression is that even Bourlon Wood, into which I looked at from the Spoil Heap between Hermies and Havrincourt in November, 1917, when the 40th Division and the Guards were fighting there and breathing gas poison, was not a much gloomier spot than “the abysmal depths of personality,” into which religious questioning soon plunged me. In Bourlon,

* Irregular reading ; but not, I think, idle books which Owen Felltham condemned as “corrupted tales in ink and paper . . . he that angles in these waters is sure to strike the torpedo, that, instead of being his food, confounds him. Besides the time ill-spent in them, a twofold reason shall make me refrain : both in regard of my love to my soul, and pity unto his that made them.”

hell consisted in a real and incessant peril to the body ; whereas this other hell consisted in an imaginary peril to the mind. Hell spent among birds' eggs and butterflies, rabbit shooting, pony riding, Scott's stories and the poetry of Wordsworth—the thing may strike people who have never gone down the pit as nonsense. But they are wrong ; they can never have been in the deep, or they would not make light of it.

The family doctor tried medicine, a tonic, to fetch me out of the pit. I have come oddly enough rather to believe in medicine as an antidote to hell ; our local doctor was in that, perhaps, cleverer than he knew. But in childhood, at any rate, the only sure medicine is time ; and after a time I came out of the pit, minus, alas, the Old Testament. The Book of Genesis had clean gone ; Kings and Samuel too. I cultivated Deism for some years after, and derived some cold comfort from Pope's " Essay on Man."

Religious questions—though one played with them at Oxford for argumentative and intellectual purposes—ceased, after a year or two, to tear me to pieces. That thing, an agony at first, seems to have burnt itself out in me. I can still understand people descending into the pit. I look down it, myself, at times ; but it is not a religious pit. Cowper's case—the purely religious one—I cannot fully understand. But Cowper was not mad ; it is only dullards and hulking clods of matter that regard Cowper in his agony as mad.

I would like an enchanted carpet, and it should take me back, not forward ; but I think, on the whole, I should prefer it not to take me back to the period when I was often down in the pit ; although, even during that period, there came some wonderful, radiant intervals. I could forget for a time even the pit when I was in Ireland for a holiday, angling for perch—which I did not catch—in the river Liffey near Dublin ; or when I was shooting my first rook *flying*, in the park of Enham Place, where one's great-great-grandfather had probably shot his rooks at about the same spot with a flint-lock (I got my rooks with a pin-fire, 12 bore) ; or

when I was "in" at village cricket, and had scored a run against a round-arm or over-hand ball. In the enchanted land the pit, after all, was never so far from paradise.

CHAPTER II

THE PASSING OF AN OLD REGIME

CROSSING from Kingstown to Holyhead one night in the Autumn of 1917, I found myself the solitary civilian in a carriage full of Colonial Officers. The conversation among them soon turned from the war and religion to Ireland and England and English institutions. It never ceased till Euston was reached, it scarcely waned. Two or three of the officers, unattracted by the theme, slipped off to sleep, and, with intervals, slept all the way. The others kept wide awake. The Canadian giant next to me saw to that. His strength was inexhaustible, and boundless his curiosity to hear and examine the assertions of the New Zealander opposite. I did not for some time join in. I hate intruding in the conversation of strangers, however open the debate may be. Besides, I was the one Englishman there, and English customs and prejudices were being criticised freely by these Greater Britons. But it was impossible for me to read or to sleep, so I became an enforced listener. The young New Zealander was against England and for Ireland. He looked—I think he was—something of a dreamer, like many of these children of the vast spaces oversea, though when it came to the question of military service, he was not at all the Celt. He vowed that in New Zealand, after the war, not an embusque in all the country would be suffered to buy land. However, he upraided England chiefly for this military delinquency of Ireland's.

The Canadian, on the other hand, was strong in his denunciation of Ireland, though by descent an Irishman. He was as democratic as the New Zealander in his

attitude to war, government, kaisers, and steeped in the spirit of peace among nations and the brotherhood of man. He soon discovered himself to me a passionate lover of England, and everything old English.

So the two argued for hours ; the giant, who was intellectual, always contriving, whenever the discussion seemed like dying out through sheer exhaustion in the arguments, to revive it by starting on some slightly new or unexplored line of suggestion. The New Zealander was flagged, but he gallantly responded to the appeal, and the discussion was kept going. The other officers occasionally half-awoke, tried to listen to a few words, looked mystified, and slipped into slumber again.

I never met a man like that Canadian major. I believe, had he been with the Fifth Army on March 21st and 22nd, 1918, during its retreat, that he would have gladly sat up and talked through the night of the 23rd and 24th. The extraordinary thing was that his talk was packed with original thought and experience ; it never sank to repetition of collective commonplace. Some of it was not deep, and there was not much sign of regular training and education ; but it was his wholesome own. Like Coleridge, he might have thanked God that his head was always at the mountain tops, in pure air and blue sky.

I would rather meet that Canadian again, and listen to him for an hour or so, than any other man I have met during the war. I tried to find him, as he suggested it, but in vain. He was going back to France—perhaps he lies silent there.

I kept out of the argument as long as I could without appearing to be surly ; but when it came to Oxford and Cambridge, and the English county family tradition, the Canadian turned directly to me, and simply fetched me in. The New Zealander developed additional rancour over the Universities. He had lately visited Oxford, greatly admired the old colleges and libraries, and was in touch with the dreaming spires. But the privileges which hedged about Oxford for " your upper classes " chiefly, the kind of undergrad who was there,

or ordinarily would be there—for these he had no patience. It was no national University at all.

The Canadian saw the seamy side of privilege, but found in these ancient traditions something of essential value to a country. There was nothing like them in Canada or the United States; spiritually and aesthetically how much poorer, therefore, those great, free countries! Then they put it to me, and I had to tell them I had been brought up in that old tradition and University.

The sun rose, the familiar landscapes of the south lit up in a strange, mysterious beauty. The Canadian called our attention to the glimmering scene, wove it apparently into his eulogy of ancient England. One has often heard these themes wrangled over in clubs, debating societies, Parliament, and how banal or stale the thing appears! Whereas these Colonials made of it somehow a captivating, fresh romance. The New Zealander asked my pardon when a gibe at the conceited and superficially cultured Oxford type drew from me the admission that I came under the reproach. But after all, without his acidity, the Canadian's sweetness might have slightly palled before we reached Euston. You need both qualities in the search for truth over these social questions. If I met my Canadian travelling companion again, and returned to that enquiry betwixt Holyhead and Euston, I might be tempted to take a leaf or so from the New Zealander's book, though I happen to prefer the Canadian's. Truth lies incompletely discovered as yet, somewhere in the golden mean of things.

I spoke, in the first chapter, of the great territorialists coming in 1872 to the Cavalry picnic on Beacon Hill, of the Sir Aylmer Aylmers in their Aylmerism.* There were few of them left, even in the 'seventies. People talk and write of feudalism in England, of how at length it is doomed because all men and women now

* "Partridge-breeders of a thousand years," Tennyson described, or made Leolin to describe, them. But partridge-breeding is strictly a modern form of game preserving

have the vote, and henceforth the country is to be "secured for democracy." But what do they mean by feudalism? Clearly they cannot mean the Norman or the Anglo-Norman body of custom by which the vassal held—the Saxon vassal had actually owned—his land on condition of rendering suit and service to his lord in peace, and military help in war. They cannot be thinking of the duty which attached to the tenant of ransoming my lord should he be taken captive, or of furnishing aid for the knighting of my lord's eldest son, and for the marrying of his eldest daughter. In fact, they can't mean feudalism at all, that ancient state of society which, every reader of history well knows, had its virtues—as well as its vices when the lord was harsh—from the standpoint of the poor. Feudalism connoted responsibility, a human tie of sorts, at an age when this was invaluable to the weaker. It is become a bogey word, yet I doubt whether the intellectual socialist would condemn eleventh century feudalism at its best—the real thing—so savagely as he would condemn nineteenth century commercialism.

Of his own accord—I was not praising feudalism—a publicist who preaches hot socialism once a week and desires a brotherhood of man said to me one day in Scotland :

" I am not up against the old patriarchal type of lord who looks after the people on his estates as I am up against the rich commercialist to whom his workers are machines for producing wealth."

Now, there was in feudalism at its best a good deal of the old patriarchal type of lord, who looked after the people on the estate.

But feudalism has been dead for centuries, so it cannot be that which still gives offence to people to-day. A pacifist might as well be offended by the cross-bow. There was no feudalism in the 'seventies, of course, any more than there were socage tenants or villeins regardant, but there still were a few of its pale ghosts. There were old county families at any rate, which, though not directly descended from the feudal

system, might pass—loosely—for its ghosts. These families enjoyed great prestige which did spring largely from the fact that they had been for generations settled on the same estates. The old landed families lingered on in our district, as they did in other parts of England, as the ruling class in country life. And when to-day feudalism is lashed, the lash is really meant for them.

Old family influence and pride, "The County"—there you have the cockshy or culprit, not feudalism at all.

Even so, the culprit escapes, for the truth is he has become virtually extinct all over the country. I question whether north Hampshire differs in this from England generally; and in north Hampshire, as well as in the adjoining parts of Wiltshire and Berkshire, the great majority of the old county families have disappeared since the 'seventies. If my Canadian travelling companion were to visit those parts in order to study and admire the old family institution, he would go away somewhat disillusioned, I fear. Except for the few greater families there are no old county families left to speak of in this corner of England, families that have been settled on the soil for, say, two hundred years. And, as for the territorialists, they can be counted on the fingers of one hand. In the 'seventies, "The County" was going—at the close of the century it had gone. It was then re-peopled by strangers, often by people entirely new to rural life; and here is a fact which has been overlooked by those who hold forth on feudalism—those newcomers themselves have, between the 'seventies and to-day, largely disappeared! They bought up estates, played at the country life and the county *role*. They built, rebuilt, fenced. They took their part in the social amenities, in the administration of their districts, many of them striving to unite the country gentleman's life with the business man's career. But they, too, have fallen away. "They came like water, and like wind they went," and a fresh army of invaders has taken their place.

Setting aside the few territorialists, how many county

families are there in the whole of this north west Hampshire, say from Basingstoke to Tangle, and from Highclere to Stockbridge, who were there more than a hundred years ago? I doubt if in all that countryside they number over a dozen. But, further, how many are there to-day who were settled on the same estates fifty years ago? Only a few. I think a family does not live on a county estate to-day so long a time as it lives in a London square. The good old families of Putney Rise and Highgate, what a stable institution by comparison is there. I am not sure that some of us tenants of Chelsea and West Kensington flats may not presently be offering in this a lesson to our country caravanserai. As for Bloomsbury, it positively needs a Burke.

Now, in the 'seventies, with their forgotten far-off things and battles (between occasionally some of the reigning houses) long ago, we could have shown my sympathetic Canadian major and satiric New Zealand lieutenant something like a bit of old social England. But before calling up a few ghosts of feudalism, I take the precaution of making my own standpoint clear; for it is not good to be suspect of snobbery—if you get none of the spoils of snobbery. I have carried away none of the alleged loot from the land and its gilt-edged securities, nor striven to. Motives neither of pride nor profit, in my own case, come in at all. Lord Acton described George Eliot as creeping into the skins of the men and women she wrote of, watching the world through their eyes, learning all about their latent convictions, and then regaining her independence, and giving the world the benefit of her experience dispassionately. All that is far beyond my ability. But I can speak and write of what I have seen, known and heard of "The County," without the least passion.

I believe that on the whole this old country family tradition, which succeeded feudalism, made for the good of England. The first thing to consider in regard to it is an extraordinarily invidious one—good birth, old family. That, more than anything, has damned the tradition,

the whole class which stands—or rather stood—for the tradition. Adherence to the Church as against Non-conformity, partiality for the game laws, interference at elections, notices that “trespassers will be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law,”* none of them has given such general offence as this claim, or the charge of good birth, old family. It has excited general ridicule—but it has excited fury. The ridicule is easy to understand. Claims to good birth, old family, whether well-founded or not, always verge on the ridiculous. A man descended straight from the Conqueror must needs laugh in his sleeve at them if he has the faintest sense of fun. They suggest such a ludicrous inflation. But I cannot understand the fury. How can we be enraged with a man who claims to be descended from the Conqueror or the Red Roses unless we happen to be enthusiastic scholars in genealogy or heraldry? There is no general animus towards a new knight or peer because he takes on a new discovered coat of arms. There is only a little ridicule towards that new knight—ridicule because all classes recognise with Chateaubriand that you cannot improvise nobility, it being the daughter of time. Why then should there be such bitter feelings against claims to good birth, old family seeing there is none against the new knights or nobles? Moreover, this anger is not kept only for those who claim or flaunt the thing. It is anger that such a thing as good birth or old family can be—such a snobbish thing!

Philip Gilbert Hamerton in “The Intellectual Life” breaks out against what he calls the “ultra-democratic spirit . . . the intolerance of the sentiment of birth, that noble sentiment which has animated so many hearts with heroism and urged them to deeds of honour.” He identifies it with “the ultra-democratic spirit” which is hostile to culture and all delicate and romantic

* I cannot remember having seen the last seven words of that notice, which strike one as droll; but it is possible they were used in the romantic age of spring guns and man gins. The only man gin I can recollect having seen was shown to me in Rome in 1917. But that was not the bad squire's or the feudalists' gin. It had been set by the Austrians to catch Italians.

sentiment. So far as this country goes, I believe Hamerton was wrong in attributing the intolerance to democratic feeling. Democrats do not appear to nourish this anger against old family. The sentiment does not stir them to wrath or to admiration. They are detached and cold, if anything, about it. They were—and, so far as such things still exist, are—angry against the game laws, interference at elections by powerful landowning families, the threats to prosecute trespassers with the utmost rigour of the law. That is quite another matter. Hamerton himself would probably have shared the distaste of democracy for those things. I think it will be found that the intolerance belongs to all sorts of people who are remote from democracy—from the workingmen and women, the town and country poor. It is the intolerance, I suspect, of comfort ; of the middle rich and the well-off.

Except in what he says about the democratic spirit being against the sentiment, I agree in the main with Hamerton. The sentiment is a noble one, like the Japanese worship of ancestors. In the first place, it gave colour and variety to our social life. That was its aesthetic side, and such a side is as much needed in a nation's society as in a nation's constitution. There was a romance, something of a pageant, about it to touch the imagination of all classes. Its fair demesnes and parks, steeped in peace and beauty, the curious body of manorial customs and local legendry of old families, the tales about the good squires and the bad squires—there were both—appealed through the eye and ear to the imagination of large numbers of people. It was, on the whole, a good appeal. It quickened fancies far finer than those we could hope to get through our average art and print.

Then there was the side of reverence. The censorious man will break out against this and ask whether I am in favour of servility, bowing and scraping and curtsying and touching the hat to powerful and rich people? I loathe servility to the powerful and rich, and agree out and out with Robert Burns that “the

man's the man for a' that and a' that." Servility is as revolting as hypocrisy. Self-interest at the cost of self-respect is at the root of servility to the powerful and rich, a damnable thing. It degrades alike the man who renders and the man who complacently accepts it. But there was a reverence for the sentiment of birth, there still is a reverence—though shy and rarer—for such old families as linger, which only stupid people could confuse with servility. That reverence lessened no man. John Stuart Mill, a great man, in discussing the classes and masses, tells the former that their rule is passing, but he has nothing to say against reverence. It was not due to the desire to keep well in with the rich, and receive favours and profitable patronage from them; it sprang from the respect felt towards those who stayed by the land through bad times and good for many generations, and tried to do their duty by the neighbourhood.

No doubt the reverence sometimes grew less marked as the individual who paid it mounted on the ladder of life. There was a farmer in our district whose skill with the soil won him more than local fame. This man began on a humble scale, and when, on driving to market, he met the aristocratic land-agent of one of our three or four north Hampshire territorialists, he touched his hat, with a "Good morning, sir."

Later, he was left money, and became an owner instead of a tenant. Then, on meeting that agent, he lifted his hat, with a "Good morning, Captain Fitz——." (I forget the rest of the name.)

But when he became rich and important, and stood for Parliament, and ultimately got in, he would just tip the Captain a nod, with a cheery, "Morning, Fitz——."

That was all very human, but I am not sure that the man was not quite as good a man, and quite as near Burns's a' that, in the first phase as in the third.

These old families on the land treated "their people" well; that is the third and substantial virtue that can be put to the credit of those ruling classes of the countryside. There were unholy exceptions. They were not

all Roger de Coverleys. Not every hall was Washington Irving's Bracebridge, or FitzGerald's Bredfield; and its owner had not always "served the poor, and built the cottage, raised the school and drain'd the fen." But the average will stand comparison well with that of any other dominant class perhaps in any country during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From all I have read and heard, it would come well out of a comparison with the ruling manufacturing and commercial classes of the nineteenth century. The land system has had to be legislated against—but what of the factory system? I have learnt a little about the factories by visiting them at their marvellous work during the last year or two. I have seen the new 1918-1919 national factories and workshops; and in those there is room to move and breathe; there are light and air, and the environment is human. They are stately built, the health and welfare of the workers are anxiously provided for. But not all the factories of even the twentieth century are of that order. Sir Roger de Coverley and Washington Irving's squire were far remoter from the average of the factory owner in, let us say, the 'seventies than from the old English land system. That is putting it mildly.

There sprang up between some of the old families and those who served them for a lifetime—and whose forbears not seldom had served their forbears—an understanding rare between wage payer and wage earner. There was familiarity, but it did not breed contempt on either side. There are cases where this understanding, which was one of the social triumphs of the old land system, has lived on even to this day. Quite lately a friend told me that she had been discussing news of the day with John, her cowman, a racy village character of the historic Hampshire type; no "scholar," and having little truck with reading and writing and such-like, but with a power of knowledge about milk, and the nature and needs of cows and farm stock. She said to him:

"John, have you heard the latest news? All women

are now to have the voate. I shall have the voate."

This was a slip, for a peeress in her own right is not included in the new franchise, but it was not perceived by the cowman, who simply looked up at his mistress in amazement, and remarked :

"What next?"

It happened sometimes that the old tie between the two sides placed the trusty serving man in a commanding position. He was deeply entrenched, through continuity of service in two or three generations, and he reached decided views as to his sphere of duties, and as to his master or mistress's sphere, on which he took his stand and would not budge. I distinctly remember a scene in the 'seventies, illustrative of this. Some large flints lay about the turf near the front door of a country house, perhaps half a dozen of them. The mistress of the house had been talking with an old retainer, certainly a two generation man on the estate. She called his notice to these flints when he was going on one of his ornamental rounds in velvetreen, the ancient muzzle-loader under his arm.

"Don't you think," she remarked with a suggestion of gentle irony in her tone, "that you could pick up those flints and put them in the copse?"

"Ah," he replied, "I should look pretty at that, shouldn't I?"

And he moved off on his ornamental round.

This man was not to be trifled with. I believe he had taken a leading part in the procession the last time the bounds of the manor were beat.

Those Caleb Balderstones and Andrew Fairservices of the old regime on the land had their idiosyncracies, and were often self-willed, being rooted deep in estate customs which were good enough for their grandfathers, and therefore good enough for them. But their loyalty to the house was a brave quality—no taint of servility or of snobbery about that. Endless examples of the trusty serving man of the old families could be cited. They offer some fair evidence of the worth of those families; even allowing for the fact that there have been

great houses in English History, such as the Stuarts, who in trial have taken from their followers a greater measure of loyalty than they have rendered back in prosperity. The old family retainer was sustained by loyalty rather by royalty—as Mudie well wrote concerning that John Paulet, Marquis of Winchester, who held the Castle of Basing in north Hampshire for the King till Cromwell came and stormed it “like a fire-flood.” There was little of the courtier or the adulator about this class. It looked upon its service as a solemn trust.

The oldest Houses of all have quite gone, perished tone and tint, throughout not only north Hampshire, but the whole country. Where are the feudal families, De Ports,* Brocases, Bigods? What names of romance to muse upon! They sound like synonyms for feudalism and the true knightly caste. There is no danger of being reproached as a snob in taking off one’s hat to a Bigod at any rate—it is out of the question to tip him a nod when passing. I should hold mine in my hand whilst talking to him. This was the true Conquest lot. One at least of them lingered on into modern times, and a strange legend was related to me a few years ago by a member of the group which succeeded Brocases, Bigods, De Ports. She told me that one of the descendants of pure feudalism was represented on the land, almost on the original estate, within the last forty years. The family sank, its vitality slowly, very slowly, ebbing till there came a wastrel generation, whose final male representatives went clean astray, little better than desperadoes. Then its eight hundred years of history closed! One can still trace the family moat, or one could ten years ago when I was living near the place. I suspect the legend has flaws, but it is true that the name unchanged survived on the land through Norman, Plantagenet, Tudor, Stuart and Georgian epochs into Victorian days.

There succeeded that primordial feudal group another which may be said to have started half-way through

* “Adam de Port, d’une race Saxonne du Hampshire laquelle possédait vingt-cing manoirs.”—Ch. de Rémusat.

English history, Beaches with Withers and Bramstons interlocked ; Powletts, Wallops ; north Hampshire and Wiltshire names and houses, midway in English history—and to-day.

Turn a little south, and you will find the village named Tichborne. A Walter Tichborne held the manor, or part of it, in 1135. A Henry Tichborne holds it to-day.

But, as I said, only a few of the greater houses lived into modern times and even till this day. The bulk of the lesser houses could at most claim lustres to their credit—the credit of constancy on the same bit of English soil—where the *grand seigneurs* could calculate their stay by centuries. And that bulk has, to all purposes, now quite gone. It was succeeded by an invasion in later Victorian times—which, as I have already shown, has disappeared too.

Virtually, then, it can be said—in candour, it must be said—that the old order has ended. The decay of agriculture in the last decades of the nineteenth century and in the first decade of the twentieth, Cairn's Act, death duties, fuller and fuller franchise, are each and all said to be causes of this sweeping change on the land. I think that, to understand the change, we must look beyond those things into the evolution, social and educational, of the whole nation.

But whatever the causes, direct or indirect, we have to face the change. We have to face this absolute certainty : in the social, economic, and political reconstruction before us, a new land arrangement will be made.

I am sure the masses of the people, now they have supreme power through the new franchise, will not long suffer the present land conditions ; I am sure the Army, demobilised, will not long suffer them. The truth cannot be hidden from these masses, military and civilian, that the present land phase is not an old English one at all ; that it is fluctuating and haphazard, and that an immense number of extemporised owners have no relationship to the soil, are not rooted therein,

but come and go as fancy or as city ties and commerce prompt.

England has now neither a strong peasantry nor a fixed landowning class. Here and there she has a few of the ancient stock left on the soil, their numbers minute. She has no other stable and constant stock at all. The masses of the nation mean to intervene in the land resettlement—as they mean to intervene in the control and profits of the great industries. I have not come to this conclusion flightily; it has been borne in on me after two years' experience of the military fronts, and of the working class base. I do not believe the workers intend to dispossess without compensating owners, however newly arrived on the land or in the factories these may be.

But the workers are intent on coming in themselves, and sharing in the control, a thing they have hitherto scarcely dreamt of doing. There is going to be a tremendous, sweeping all round change in the social and economic system of this country.

What will happen to the land? I hope it will be decided to plant on it, thoroughly and systematically, a very large body of small owners and cultivators, who will be far more stable and constant than any invasion of week-enders and commercial people with a taste for shooting or fancy farming, and so forth, can prove. We want three-quarters of a million small owners, new small owners. I have been urging this course for years past on politicians and in the Press, because I have felt the immense need of a steady class on the English land, producing and itself possessing, such as France, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and various parts of Germany have, and Italy has been getting wherever the bad system of *latifondo* there can be broken down.

Without the small and constant landed proprietary, France would not have stood the strain of the war. It has been a grand asset to her throughout her agonising struggle.

I wish to see a small ownership scheme adopted here by the State, in order also that, through it, we may

conserve what was best and most proven of the historic land system. There would be, I believe, no need in bringing these small men into the system, to oust the few old families. We do not want a dead monotony of tenure in England, but a blending of the new and old, of practise and picturesque. We want, within reason, to carry into the future the noble and well-tested things of the past so far as the land is concerned.

I advise all people who value those things of old England, to fling themselves without reserve into this small owner movement. At the moment there is a reaction against it, I believe, by politicians who before the war favoured it. Food production for years to come, they say, will be a matter of supreme moment ; and corn and cattle can be produced and handled better in greater quantity by large farmers and owners and blocks of capital than by small ones ; therefore, they press, " let us farm on the ample scale, introducing scientific methods and State encouragement everywhere, and satisfy the mass of the workers by paying them well."

That plan is good in some ways. Food production here will, for years, be a paramount need, and we ought to have plenty of ample farming, scientific methods, business application, State watchfulness, and, in various matters, State direction, too. But a minimum wage of twenty-five—or of forty-five shillings—a week will not give us a stable country population. It will never solve the rural problem, never fix the worker contented on the soil. There can be no security in it, no pride and enthusiasm for the villagers over the land.

To satisfy the workers—and in this I completely sympathise with these workers and have for years past—we simply must suffer them in large numbers to have an owning interest in the soil of England. It is utterly hopeless to try to arouse zeal in the worker on the land unless you give him a real chance to share in the land. You might as well try to arouse zeal in the machine as zeal in our country workers for soil which practically you forbid them to share in ; and I am bound to say that, wherever I have gone among the workshops and

shipyards of the North, I have seen the same thing clearly there. It is spreading to the Midlands, and to our more unimaginative South even. A share in the control, a share in the property—the whole industrial world is unmistakeably moving towards that goal, and the rural world is bound to follow. When a business man tells me that good cottages and a generous wage are all that is needed, I know, no matter how good he is at “business,” that he has failed to understand the most powerful current of feeling among the masses to-day, whether civilian or military.

Good wages and good cottages may be fifty per cent. of the whole problem of labour, country and town. But observe: the other fifty per cent. relates to a share in the control, a share in the possession, a share in the dignity.

The longer we put off this resettlement of England by small ownership, the worse it will fare, when the inevitable step is taken, for the few old families on the land; still worse, for the class which has poured in and taken possession during the last few decades. If this class does not come into the movement, it will end by being thrown out. A marked feeling is growing up against the way in which strangers—mere adventurers—here one year, gone perhaps the next, have been buying and selling England of late. They barter in the soil at home, as their prototypes bartered in the serf abroad. It may not be expressed in the villages in coherent language as yet, but the thing is there. Somewhat as a discontented man in a factory or shipyard says to his fellow-worker, “Why should we work to put money in the pockets of big shareholders and directors who know next to nothing of our job, and hardly ever come near us?”: so the village workers—many of whose families have been generations in the same district—have a feeling there is something wrong in the land at their doors, in the houses they live in, being trafficked by one invasion of complete strangers after another.

The old families inspire village respect, sometimes

affection. The hamlet's hat would still be off to a De Port. The newcomers, any day to be succeeded by newer comers, are not regarded as the same thing, the real thing, to the country eye. They may win, through money, a measure of popularity, so long as they spend ; but it rarely lasts. I am not criticising them—I am simply recording the villager's criticism. They will be the first to suffer if the land problem is solved by rough methods : and it comes plainly to this : if we do not resettle the whole land system on a broad scale, and introduce the people in all directions to a share in the soil, we shall one day awake to a revolution which will sweep away everything.

CHAPTER III

OXFORD

IN 1899 I was at Oxford, to see honorary degrees given to Rhodes and Kitchener in the Sheldonian. Rhodes, quite mercurial, looked pleased as a schoolboy. He laughed to the gallery where some undergrads were calling on him in the old impenitent way to translate the Latin spoken in his praise. Kitchener was more stolid; still he was clearly in one of his sunnier moods, and the general good humour and chaff were infectious.* I wandered about the place afterwards, and visited some old haunts, and felt "the same and not the same." I had just seen two of the most successful men on earth. It is suggestive after such a scene to contrast with them some of the men one has known who have gone down failures in the world, as we say. I recall three. One of these—they not only failed, they are dead—was a close friend of mine in the 'eighties at my own college, Pembroke. Of the other two, the first spent some happy days with me there one term, the second was steeped in all that is most spiritual and precious about the place. As none of the three reached the slightest wordly fame, and as they have long been forgot, except by a very small and dwindling circle of friends, I need not give the full names and addresses now.

Nevil's attraction lay more in sterling character than in

* He certainly had occasional sunny moods. Once he was speaking to his staff about the peerage to be conferred on him. He said he supposed it would have to be Kitchener of Khartoum, a nuisance, because he would be sure to be nicknamed "K of K."

"Why, Sir, the very thing," ventured young Maxwell, V.C., one of his favourites: "K of K—King of Kings, of course." The sally pleased Kitchener.

charm. He sent himself, I believe he almost wholly kept himself, at Oxford by his own exertions. He lived, at least after his first term or so, by tutoring during the vacations. The scanty pay he got by his work during the Summer Vac. or Long, supported him through the rest of that year and into the following. "A dog's life," most men who have been to Oxford will agree. Yet, Nevil for all his economy—rigid, necessarily—lived no mean, stinted life during his three and a half years at Pembroke. He went—always noisily—to his friends' breakfasts; now and again to a wine; and he gave a breakfast to those friends, and even a wine of sorts. He boated—at which he had not much form, but into which he threw all his force. He got through his pass exams., took a third in the Honours School of Modern History and his B.A. Degree.

A fierce politician, Tory out and out, and proud of his aristocratic descent, he spoke at college debating societies, and once or twice at the Union: not well. He had a weakness for knocking opponents down with words: and I recall that, almost immediately after his very early marriage on leaving Oxford, he proceeded physically to knock down some probably innocent man at one of the old Promenade Concerts on suspicion of the man having pushed his wife in the crowd.irate, unreasonable, noisy, romantic, generous, great-souled Nevil, I can hear his merry laugh across the years, often enough at my own expense; can recall his horseplay, and at least one roughish practical joke—also at my expense, though I got even eventually by a stiff one at his.

If there is to be another world where we are to meet and recognise the friends long lost, I should hope to see Nevil in his old, loud, robustious form. I would not have him drop his voice. Granted he was somewhat too much at times for his friends, granted he was not "correct" in his "deportment"—the soul of the man was refined. It knew no mean thing, was nobly impatient of ill-doing and ill-thinking. Nevil was a patriot, regardless of whether it paid or not. *He* was a

Great Englander. No man I have ever met in public life, or whose career I have followed, has appealed to me as a purer patriot, or better citizen.

He was not the exact scholar, had nothing of the scholar's melancholy. He had not much literary instinct, though he revelled in some good books ; made me read aloud " Aylmer's Field " to himself and his young wife during their honeymoon—and told me to shut up, " Enoch Arden " was rot, when, maladroitly, I tried a line of that, forgetting he was about to start for Australia to try his luck at the Bar there, and leave his wife to follow later. He would chant " Arethusa Arose " with other scraps from Shelley, and was full of Kingsley's poetry and prose : there was something of Kingsley's Tom Thurnall about the man, and something of Kingsley. In boisterous scenes Nevil was in his element: strumming on the piano, singing—always out of tune, or, best of all, a college " rag "—that was part of his *métier*. A breakfast at Worcester closed in a rag of a rather risky character. The host, a friend of mine, had an eccentricity. He believed he might be set on, outside Oxford, by robbers, so he armed himself with pistols. All his friends knew this, and after the breakfast when a large scone of college ale had gone round—it was a common custom to drink buttery ale after breakfast—the uproar grew. There was chaff about the mysterious, hidden armoury. Presently one of the pistols was produced, and somehow in the excitement it was fired : the ball passed just over Nevil's head, and lodged in the wainscot of the old room—one of the oldest in the college. At that, the rag ended suddenly, even Nevil thinking it had gone far enough. I forget the result : probably the host was hauled up by the college authorities, and gated or fined. Nothing, I think, happened to the guests, except that they were sobered. The incident did not cure of his eccentricity the owner of the pistol ; for afterwards, when I called on him in town, I remember his suddenly drawing a sword out of a harmless-looking walking stick. Many of us live at seasons in a curious world of suspicions, where somebody is always laying

dark designs and plots against us. This Worcester man—quite a good fellow—not merely imagined the thing, he took arms against it. He would have been more in his element in Petrograd to-day than in pacific England of the 'eighties.

Rowdiness was only a lesser though observable side of Nevil. Outwardly, he may have been loud, a little offensive at times : his soul was free from the least taint of vulgarity. He found progress too slow at home. Despite aristocratic connections, he had nobody to push him, and was too proud and independent to seek much aid. He impulsively rushed off to Australia to make a career for himself and his wife, strained the cord too tightly there, and it snapped.

The other two men, with better intellectual gifts than Nevil, and with more refinement, also went under. One of them was beaten through a weak constitution and health nearly always ailing, the other, after family misfortunes, through strong drink. Three tragic endings, however I look at it. These men, the first through sterling character, the others through an exquisite appreciation of what is good in literature and art, and in life generally, *should* have succeeded in the world. Their aims were pure, their influence could only have worked good. Thinking, without bitterness, of many who started with them and have made names, fortunes, positions, one cannot help recognising that success is largely a question of blind chance. I am sure the men who succeeded were not better, in character and intelligence—certainly not better spiritually—than those three wrecked ones. Worship of success, hero-worship in that field, is a poor, degrading thing. For my part, I had as soon bow before an ancient coat of arms, a Norman lineage, as before a wordly success. Perhaps the former, like the latter, is an act of snobbery. Yet, at least in the coat of arms or the descent from the Conqueror—where it can be proven—there is something aesthetic. There is a faint whisper of old England, of chivalric mediaevalism, about the one ; about the other, very often nothing but push and crassness. Neither

is the side of the angels—but one, at least, is the side of the knights.

Reverting to the blind chance of the thing, its flukiness : wordly success to-day indicates money—a lot of it, or a comforting sufficiency of it. Now, money is counters ; and counters, as everyone recognises who has gamed, is largely an affair of chance. One cannot resist the conviction—when all has been said about merit coming by its own—that success is often won in the game of life as counters are won in the game of cards, by chance or luck. And, if so, how we waste our hero-worship on it !

It is fair to add this : men who have made a wordly success of life are sometimes alive to the truth. One has known them admit it, and deprecate being described as great and wonderful characters.

Who was the best man in my time at Oxford ? I mean by this a really good man, who later, by sheer merit did mount in life and public estimation. I don't think there was a heavy crop of men up with me in the 'eighties who have made a sensation in the world. I was after the time of men like Lord Milner and Lord Curzon ; and before the time of Sir John Simon, Hilaire Belloc and that group. Belloc has been named as the most brilliant man of his period at Oxford ; and I should think from what I have read of his political speeches and of his books—especially his verse—that the description is right. The root of the thing, in verse, imaginative literature and independent politics, is in him. I confess to finding his war material harder to enjoy—but I find nearly all the literature about the war, so far as our English output goes, very hard to enjoy. I think there was no one up with me who was so fresh and versatile in politics and literature as Belloc. Mine was a somewhat jejune period in those fields.

About the three best men for public life, though I did not guess it, and did not know any of them, even by sight, were Edward Grey, Douglas Haig, of Brazenose, and J. A. Spender. They cut no figure at Oxford. and Haig was not widely known till many years later.

Sir Edward Grey I first met at Westminster years ago through some literary association. He wrote an introduction for an edition of Izaak Walton's "Compleat Angler," which I was responsible for, and also a book in the Haddon Hall Library, edited by Lord Granby and myself. I will speak of him and his work later.

Sir Douglas Haig I had never seen till I met him in September, 1916, at his advanced headquarters during the Battle of the Somme. One had pictured him at the first Battle of Ypres in October, 1914, riding slowly by his men in that amazing struggle—we really did "save Europe" by the stand at Ypres—and inspiring all ranks by a calm and debonnair presence. Sir Douglas Haig has not struck on the fancy of the public, neither on the many nor on the few, as did Kitchener and Roberts. He was not acclaimed at all till the war was over. I believe him to be a great professional soldier. There is an idea among some critics that he stands too much for the old feudal side of the army, stiffish or starched, fortunate from the start through our social system, aristocratic. Others insist he makes no appeal imaginatively, and that genius is to seek in him. Now, starting with no prepossessions in favour of stiffness and starch, detached in regard to the feudal side—though, historically and aesthetically, feudalism touches me—and a seeker all my days after imagination, I entirely disagree with these critics. I find him a master in the art and practice of war; wonderfully equable in hard circumstances; free of hauteur; ardent in patriotism; indefatigable in exertion; exact in details. A great figure, to my view, and a man of all men to command a citizen army leavened by the old professional soldier.

As to genius, one is not particularly conscious of it anywhere during this war: by genius, I mean a Napoleon, Marlborough, Turenne, Wellington (whose work and design in Spain during the feeble Perceval and Castlereagh period was genius). Genius of course has been acclaimed repeatedly during the war in this man and that—just so long as he has been notably on

the top. But genius was never made by acclamation nor proved by success.

Sir Douglas Haig struck one as the right man when things were going well. He did not raise his voice too high then—it is not the way of the soldier of the right British type. But far more—for that is the harder part—he appealed to one when things were going ill. Notably, at the dark crisis in the Battle of Ypres, his presence on the scene did a great deal to restore our line when the peril was greatest. Cambrai, in November and December, 1917, miscarried. For one thing—not the only, but the chief thing—we had not enough infantry force to push home the opening day's attack. But the Commander-in-Chief never shaped much better than during the awkward reaction that followed our withdrawal at that* time. Remember, too, his quiet confidence when, at the close of the summer, 1916, silly people swarmed to the conclusion that the offensive had failed—though Verdun, as a trifle, had been relieved!—and that the enemy was not to be shifted after all. He waited to strike at Beaumont Hamel, and afterwards waited again, though enthusiasm had gone ominously cold at home, till the enemy was seen to be in full retreat. Wellington had cold waits of this kind in the Peninsula, and when did Wellington shape better as a soldier and a great man? Not at Waterloo.

Sir Douglas Haig has a sense of humour, which is a sustaining quality in soldiership. I asked leave to put to him a question about our position during the fighting on the Somme. He told me to fire away. I said I had been watching, the morning before, his guns pounding the ridge at Thiepval: was he not finding Thiepval an exceedingly hard nut to crack? He said I should have my answer from a better master of the art of war than

* I re-read, just before writing this, two letters of the Commander-in-Chief to me in 1916, 1917, when things looked bad for the British and for the Entente cause. They contain the best prediction about the war I have heard or read: prediction that has proved right. But the rightness of a prediction is a small thing. Fools and third-class people have often seemed to score there, where good men and true have failed. What matters is the spirit of the prediction, the character behind it. That is what makes a prediction from Haig worth prizing.

himself, called one of his staff, and told me to repeat my question. The soldier's reply was cautious :

"I daresay if the Commander-in-Chief liked, he could tell you that any nut can be cracked ; if you apply a heavy enough hammer to do it."

I had not time to forget the remark, for seven days later, down came the heavy hammer, and the great fortress of Thiepval was cracked.

I might, too, have divined, had I been more experienced in the art of war, that the French and British would meet on that same date in the ruined little town of Combles, some miles to the south of Thiepval. It had been fixed. There was military exactness and skill about the handling of our armies even in those days, of which impatient criticism was—and still is—uninformed. Unfortunately, men are so often acclaimed geniuses, and the rest of it, only on the strength of their latest feats in the field of action. History has another way ; it will show Haig as a great man at arms.

Before leaving the subject, I want to say a thing or two about the charge I have heard brought against him—that he has at times proved too faithful to his friends, will not desert them as he should when they have been unsuccessful. I suppose a man might sacrifice his country to his friend ; in political or in military matters. The thing might be, perhaps has been ; though I have no evidence it has occurred in this connection—only hearsay passed from chatterer to greenhorn. But, anyhow, we ought to consider what desertion of friends means. He who deserts his friends in their difficulties or hardships* is no good to God or man. His is an offence unpunishable by law : well, then, surely there has been reserved some special department for it in hell. Men who have deserted their friends in difficulty, might, appropriately, be given each his solitary confinement cell there. They should wait through eternity for someone, anyone, to

* The avoidance of a friend in his worldly prosperity and success would come under quite another head. The cynic might describe it as insane. I think, however, that it might argue independence.

come and pass the time of day with them, and no one ever should come.

It used to be said that Mr. Asquith was too faithful to his friends, and weakened his administration thereby. Then the better Asquith he.

In those days, Oxford was not a swarming school of cadets, as I found it early in 1918. The military side was very small. The Territorial movement had not started. We had the Volunteers, but the Volunteers were subject to the rebuffs which disheartened the amateur soldier in Tom Hood's verse. Oxford shone, so far as physical prowess went, above all in the football field. It had its great Rugby Team—Vassal himself, with Wade, Squire—best of fellows—Tristram, the goal keeper, Evanson, and Cave being among the stars. Everybody at the 'Varsity went to see its home matches. There was never such a period of Rugby football. I was an excited spectator of football (though I know nothing about it), of cricket—including matches against Australia, with the gigantic hitting of Bonnor, and the bowling of Spofforth—and of college boating. An excited spectator only, for I then learnt what it meant to go to Oxford, and to a non-reading college, without having graduated on the game side at a public school. My cricket had been village matches; football I had never played. Boating is another matter. Many men have never feathered an oar till they go to the 'Varsity, yet they row in their college boats in their first year, eights as well as torpids. Rowing, unlike cricket, can be started at Oxford. I trained with a view to the torpids one term, and enjoyed it for a short time; but I found Oxford so extraordinarily novel and fascinating in its social life and varied sides, that regular training soon grew irksome to me. I gave up the Lower River after a fortnight or so of discipline in fours, exchanged the college barge for the absolute freedom of the skiff, whiff, or pair-oar. Then I passed with a few friends from the Lower to the Upper River, sailing or centre-boarding, punting, sculling there through the summer term.

The Upper River is heaven for undergrads who kick

at boating discipline. It is the heaven of the boating libertine, and I was the boating libertine. It is the river, too, of many men who read hard in the morning and evening, never cut a lecture, and take their exercise methodically in the afternoon between Bossom's (I imagine there is still a Bossom at the Upper River barges) and Godstow. "College, *col lege*," remarked Charles Lamb, "a place where people read together." Unfortunately, I and my friends had a habit largely of cutting our lectures, of not reading together in the morning and evening, and yet of enjoying our afternoons during the best part of the summer term on the Upper River. That river drew to itself some most unlikely men. There was Gigas, one of the fast men at The House. He was known through the 'Varsity as one given to vexing the ear of night, a rare hand at wines, breakfasts, rags, roughish horseplay. A good-humoured, wealthy, non-rowing giant, surrounded by a circle of rapid friends—what inducement could Godstow, Wytham, and Eynsham reaches have for him? These places held me by the charm of their scenery, their remote quiet once Godstow lock had been passed. The poetry of Matthew Arnold, of "Thyrsis" and "The Scholar-Gipsy," all through is painted in the exquisite water colours of the Upper River, its parks, fields, woodlands. Now, who ever suspected Gigas of poetry—unless it were a Limerick—or of feeling for landscape? One day I discovered with surprise that he went to the Upper River in the later spring and early summer days to bird-nest. Above Godstow, where we used to drink mugs of cider and play quoits on the bit of green in front of the inn, there were eyots, along the river from the bridge up to Eynsham, where the reed-warbler built in May. I came to know one or two of these eyots well, and could find the deep, weaved nest of the reed warblers, sometimes one or two cuckoo's eggs within; and I learnt that he was keen over reed-warblers' and cuckoos' eggs, so an acquaintance sprang up between us. But his bird-nesting expeditions were occasional only; and his stay at Oxford was, I think, curtailed.

I do not remember that he migrated from The House to New Inn Hall, a place of refuge for fast men who failed too often in pass Smalls or Mods. New Inn Hall, which entertained about half-a-dozen men—sometimes fewer—has disappeared from the list of Oxford Colleges. It was a kind of three quarter way house between a college and the unattached men or "Toggers." Carne, another good-humoured, non-reading, non-rowing giant, was a migrant to New Inn Hall. He was a man to have by one in a town and gown row at Oxford. The regular town and gown was a thing of the long past, almost a myth. But there was a slight disposition to restore it one term when the Prince of Wales visited Oxford. I seem to remember that, on one of the two nights of the attempted revival, I was in Carne's keeping and glad of his company. But the rag came to nothing. Taine, in his jottings on Oxford ("Notes sur L'Angleterre, 1871") attributed the old town and gown to physical exercise: "*Sans doute la culture musculaire ainsi entendue comporte certaines rudesse de moeurs. Etudiants et bourgeois se boxent à l'occasion dans les rues. Mais revanche, la vie gymnastique et athletique a ce double avantage qu'elle engourdit les sens et pacifique l'imagination.*"

There was some effort by leading men, boating and other athletes, to give the thing a taste of its former Tom Brown fighting spirit, but it faded out when authority came rather decidedly on the scene. The town contented itself mostly with carrying off as many hats as it could lay hold of. On the second, and last, night, the 'Varsity came out hatless, and linking arms, marched up and down Corn and High with a certain amount of noise. That ended the revival: it was too artificial, apart from College intervention and the early closing of gates, to succeed.

I was not in this giant's set: had not the money for big wines, or the physical endurance, and had not the taste. But the man, in his ample good nature—though he had not the slightest tendency towards bird-nesting or books or landscape dreaming—was always ready to befriend one in anything. Once, when I was gated

after hall in the summer term for some silly escapade in which I was entangled, he came joyously to my aid. After nine o'clock the gate was closed—and I was outside. The one way to get in without being discovered, and heavily fined, or sent down for breaking my gate, was through a window. My companion was ready with both hands. He took me on to his shoulders, he held his hands aloft, and I scrambled up on them to the little window sill. Across the window stretched a small bar, not a formidable one as viewed within, for it would bend. But it was another matter getting past that bar from outside, when one was poised right knee on the narrow sill, and left foot in the grasp of the friend beneath. Ultimately, I did force my way through, and was safe on the floor, head first. I was never a member of the "Oxford Alpine Club," which existed years later, and concerned itself with climbing of the kind, but I suppose my adventure might have given me the entry to it.

After that, I broke no gate. Viewing such escapades later, one easily sees they are not only wrong, they are idiotic. Excuses are often offered for the exuberance of youth. I offer none. True, even great minds have seen college follies in a lenient light. Does not Tennyson in "In Memoriam," plead a little for "the wild oat,"* and tell us what might have been wanting had it ne'er been sown? A ready excuse is that we "got in with the wrong set," with the wine or the non-reading set; and thus were led away. I certainly did not get in with a hard-reading set ("Smugs," some men termed that set, a stupid expression, I always thought). But the right answer to that would be that I should have got in with them. For most, if not all his slips in life, a man had better blame himself. Also, for failure in the wordly career, except where ill-health, accident or malignity plays a cruel part, a man had better blame himself. It is the more independent way. The

* It is not felicitous, by the way, to speak of our frailties as the wild oat. In nature this is one of the most graceful of grasses; whereas the human frailty is graceless.

spectacle of a man always "grouching," always blaming the other fellow, for his misfortunes, is not edifying. The best plan for men who did not get into the right set at Oxford or Cambridge, and so wasted much of their time there, is to make good in after life. But it is a difficult plan, unless fortune favours later: let there be no error about that.

I was speaking of these somewhat idiotic, youthful escapades, one evening at a literary dinner at which my neighbour chanced to be a Don, and lately Pro-Proctor. He was genial—Dons and Proctors can be, out of cap and gown—and consolatory. I asked him whether my gating after hall during a summer term would still stand as an incriminatory record in *Liber Niger* (there is such a record, an historic one going back even to Elizabethan days, I believe). He could not tell. But he said that, anyhow, I should perhaps find myself in some remarkably good company. More wild oats have been sown in college days by hands fated to be illustrious, or highly respectable in after life, than is commonly supposed—sown on Mount Olympus. Taine, whom I have quoted, writes of the fetters at the old English Universities. Perhaps there is more restraint than in France. Still, there is a great deal of liberty: and it has perils. I am not preaching, but stating a fact. There is some variation in the measure of this liberty. Keble is far more disciplinary than other colleges in its method. At Balliol and Corpus in those days, a man had to work or to go. I think Balliol and Corpus were right.

Most of the wild oats of Oxford were sown as the result of "wines," i.e., wine parties. I had little enough on my conscience in that matter. Wines did not particularly attract me. I had no taste for liquor; and as a fact—though I should not have been able to distinguish good from indifferent in those days—usually at the 'Varsity it was poor stuff or downright bad. Spirits I rather disliked. A little plot was laid by my friends one night after hall to make me drunk. I suspected something of the kind, and entered into the joy

of it. Sitting close to the fire, I accepted gladly a stiff whiskey and water or soda, drank and disliked part of it. The remainder, when no one was looking, I emptied into the coal-scuttle, to which I had moved my chair. The glass was refilled. A sip or two, and it went the way of the first. After this had been repeated, I made signs of tipsiness. They were clumsy enough, but the ruse succeeded. My host saw his whiskey disappear rapidly. He was rather a canny man ordinarily, but the joke of making me drunk was too good to be given up. My glass was refilled and refilled. In the end I went away, absurdly sober in reality, but glorious in the view of the men in that room. I left the coals steeped in probably not good spirits. Next day I mentioned to a man who had been in the room what had occurred.

The only other occasion on which I have poured away drink in that reckless manner was on a golf links. A man who had been up at Oxford with me in the 'eighties (and drinking then) met me some twenty years' later on the links. He was a keen golfer and sportsman, and a very good-natured partner in a foursome. Unfortunately, he was still drinking hard, and, after nine holes, always insisted on his partner and opponents stopping at a half-way house to drink whiskey. After the game, as well as before, they were expected to take something—"heather whiskey" among other concoctions—and always at his expense. I was compelled in self defence to pour mine on the grass at that half-way house.

Wine and beer, when good, are to be desired in moderation. I like claret and burgundy, and used to like beer—though not the Oxford sponce of strong, buttery ale. Spirits can be a tonic, brandy a great medicine. I do not believe in teetotalism. But over-drinking and drunkenness—"the floating of the sternless senses in a sea"—always struck me as bestial and stupid. When was a tipsy man ever amusing? He is usually an ineffable bore: whilst the smell of stale spirits is loathsome.

I have seen a great deal of drunkenness. I have seen men and women being devoured, body and mind, by the horrible thing : and I have long thought that the State ought to lay hold of hard drinkers. Also, I would deal with the liquor interest in peace time *at least* as rigorously as Lord D'Abernon has dealt with it in war. Over-drinking ought to be, and can be, stamped out, made obsolete in this country. But I do not see why good alcohol should be totally prohibited any more than tobacco or tea. Voltaire knew the happy medium :

*“ Sans doute Bacchus e l'Amour
Ne sont point ennemis du sage ;
Il les reçoit sur son passage
Sans leur permettre un long séjour.*

There was liberty at Oxford, on the whole too much, especially over tradesmen's bills. Men were tempted to run up bills for wine and spirits, tobacco, clothes and furniture, which were often a drag on them and their families for years after. The tradesman never mentioned payment in the first term or two : later he began to press : finally he threatened. My own bills, when I left, did not amount to much more than fifty pounds ; but even that was a drag on me for several years. The ready-money system should be invariable at Oxford.

As to liberty in other matters, that is more debatable, I admit. Liberty and discipline are two great principles at the root of modern civilization. The ideal way is for a man to win liberty through discipline. The man who, starting from the bottom rung of the ladder of life, climbs up unaided to independence, to freedom, is a good instance of this. For many years he is forced to discipline himself severely. Such liberty as he may win is worth having—he has paid for it to the full through discipline, through poverty and insecurity and hardship endured. But liberty presented to a boy or man before he has earned it is too near allied to license. It is one of the defects of our social system that the so-called

second generation can succeed without the smallest effort or merit of its own to large fortunes, which often mean this rotten form of liberty—i.e., license. This is truer of the wealthy commercial class, than of the old landowning class. Great blocks of money are inherited by young men who have done nothing to earn them. The result is bad ; and I do not think the country will tolerate it much longer.

Liberty, then, should be earned through discipline ; and it was a defect at Oxford that men got a large measure of liberty at most colleges before they had thought of working for it. On the other hand, there certainly are arguments in favour of flinging a man on the world when he is twenty or so, and telling him to learn how to live.

CHAPTER IV

OXFORD—(Continued.)

I HAD gone to Oxford so steeped in English literature, and so interested in life at large, that I tended to neglect the ordinary Oxford course. True—after a preliminary failure in Smalls—I got through all my pass examinations, and I took my Degrée and “a class” in the Honour School of Modern History (men who have taken a third or fourth instead of a first or second, usually speak of “a class.”) But I had no time to work. I never worked for the pass or for the honour school; though, for Mods, I did read leisurely for a few weeks just before the exam; whilst, for history finals, I played at working during my last term and part of the preceding vacation.

If one had the whole thing over again, one would act differently—one would work tremendously hard, and take, instead of a class, the best first of one's year in history! But it occurs to me that if I had done all that at Oxford; taken my first or firsts, became a fellow of this college or that, etc., I should probably not have driven a pretty woman to see the Altar Stone at Amesbury one Sunday years ago. And I prefer that to the Fellowship, or to the fortune or comfortable competency and position which result from the best firsts of the year at Oxford.

I prefer the fourth class, plus that drive to the Altar Stone with the pretty woman, to the first class plus the fellowship and fame.

Before matriculating at Oxford, I had roamed, for part of two years, the old London bookshops off the Strand and elsewhere, often in the company of a boy,

Herbert Lee Collinson, through whom I learnt much about poetry and prose. We used to spend our sixpences and shillings on old copies of Pope, Dryden, Wordsworth, Keats, Lamb, Coleridge, and many lesser men. I added these volumes to the miscellany I had gleaned from the lumber-room at home. They formed the nucleus of a book-shelf, which in part I still possess ; and in which I find solace. I never had a library. I am glad to know I never shall have a library. It is not a case of sour grapes ; for libraries often are for show, whereas a bookshelf is for solace ; I prefer the solace. A bookshelf, which it has taken us half a lifetime or more to put together, is a friend. It lives ; and it helps us to live when health and heart run low.

That boy friend of the 'eighties and myself were, somewhat, connoisseurs in books. We enjoyed reading the old poets in the old editions. First editions were quite beyond our reach, but we hunted for the inexpensive Moxons and the Pickerings ; for Dove classics, and Sharpe's editions in paper parts of the British poets ;* for Addison and Pope in calf, for Bloomfield, Clare and Thomson in boards. To this day I keep that preference ; I can't read Clare or Keats in a dressed-up, meretricious form. I edited some years ago the big Winchester Edition of Walton's "Compleat Angler," an edition de luxe with illustrations by two famous etchers, Strang and D. Y. Cameron. I understood from Mr. Freemantle, who produced it, that America took up the large paper copies at £5 5s. apiece. But I like to read Walton in an old dress, a little, faded, shilling Walton.

Some of my books went up and matriculated with me at Oxford. For my first term or two I went on reading them in the evenings, just as if it were still the Hampshire wood, and not dark little rooms in Pembroke Street. Moreover, then and later, I enlarged my reading by visits to the library of the Union Debating Society and to the 'Varsity Libraries. I discovered

* For instance, the Poetical Works of Matthew Prior, in three volumes. Printed at the Stanhope Press by Charles Whittingham, 103 Goswell Street, 1807. For J. Sharpe. They knew a little about a title page and an embellishment at the Stanhope Press.

Hogg as a pendant to Shelley ; and I read Shelley more than ever, even delivered before a Johnson Society at Oxford a solemn paper on his poetry—not his prose or vegetarianism. Then I came to know Charles Spencer Hayward, a Magdalen man, whose instinct in lyrical poetry was sure and exquisite. He became my greatest Oxford friend—and has remained my greatest friend through life. There never passed between us the most trifling cloud. We boated and played billiards, and read poetry together, and later we angled, and walked the hills of Wales and Exmoor, together. We planned a work on British poetry and went so far as to write chapters on Tennyson, Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley. I had two literary ambitions then, and even earlier : one was to seek that “aerial spire” at Lechlade under which Shelley wrote his lyric, the other to seek Villa Magni by the bay of Lerici, from which Shelley set out on his last voyage. It took thirty years to realise the second, and it was not till last June that I went to Lechlade and saw the spire, a lovely thing to my view, full of the spiritualism characteristic of our Early English or pointed style in architecture. But it was a rarer moment of emotion when I came in a dingy little Spezzia steamer round the headland, and suddenly the whole dreaming Shelley scene, San Lorenzo, with Villa Magni and its loggia, and the Castle of Lerici, spread out before me a few hundred yards away ! So here was a literary pilgrimage long meditated, at last fulfilled. Another pilgrimage has never been carried through—to follow the road between Wem and Shrewsbury, along which Hazlitt walked with Coleridge after their first meeting, when Harmer-hill “stooped with all its pines to listen to a poet as he passed” : and later when with John Chester the two came from Nether Stowey over the Valley of the Rocks into Lynton. The first of those walks led to the most wondrous passage in English prose.

In those days I read, and I think my friends read, on no settled plan. Doubtless, from the point of view of those who see literature in the light of a lesson, our

reading was largely idle. It did not help us to "get on in the world." There was promise neither of money nor of position in it. How could the thing pay us?

Nor did we read Shelley, Lamb, Scott, Kingsley and the others on any severe principle of training the mind. We read because we were stirred and quickened by the glories of English literature. We read in all directions because we were nothing if not catholic in taste. Such reading in one's youth very likely has drawbacks. It has plenty of them from a money-making standpoint: I doubt whether it has a merit at all on that side. Moreover, from a stiff scholastic standpoint, it may not help to an orderly sequence of the ideas or to precise knowledge and all that. And yet it has its points. We read more or less at random—but we absorbed no trash. Boys at college and before college who steep themselves in writers like Shelley, Lamb, Scott and Kingsley are less liable thereafter to mistake for first class and for the real thing that which is third class and the imitation thing. The imitation jewelry is deadly prevalent in print to-day, owing to the spread of reading, and the abundance of printing machines. Much of this imitation jewelry is so smartly made, it passes for the real thing, even among some readers earnestly seeking for the best and most valuable. The same thing is seen in painting, where false feeling and superficial draughtmanship find a ready public, even among those who are striving for the light. Now, an early study of the masters of the first and second ranks in literature and in art largely fortifies a man against being taken in—that is, taken in educationally, not commercially.

A man, however, need not have had "a liberal education" to be thus fortified. I was sitting at my solitary supper in the inn at Aboyne one day and reading a play of Shakespeare's, after angling in vain for a July salmon in the Glen Tanar water. The waiter glanced at the book and remarked in the chilly Scottish way that it was a good copy of the Steevens edition. I began to talk with him of books, and found he knew

about Steevens, and Shakespeare too. In winter, when the fishing was off, he was accustomed to exchange Aboyne for Aberdeen, a waiter's life for a bookbuyers' and sellers'. But he did more than barter the books which he picked up on the stalls of Aberdeen and other cities. He often read them. That man had dived without strict method into English literature, into the great writers, whether on the list of the hundred best or not. He could somewhat distinguish the jewel from its imitation. He discovered that I did not know as much as I might about Hawthorne ; so, before I left Aboyne, he brought down from the little store he took about with him "The House of the Seven Gables," and intimated in that chilly Scottish way that it was for me to keep. I added it to my shelf, though the edition does not attract me.

A poor worker who reads Shakespeare and Hawthorne is in a better way than a rich man who, in his intervals of "getting on in the world," reads trash for relaxation.

There is a great movement to-day towards better education, and it is fired by the zeal of an Oxford man, who was up in my time, H. A. L. Fisher. But we shall not educate the masses until we devise some plan for weaning them from rubbish to reality in their reading of books. Good God, the trashy books the masses are *made* to read to-day ! I have looked into this question in not only the great hives of labour in the North, but in provincial towns all over the country. Does Mr. H. A. L. Fisher know about this, I wonder ? I was inclined, years ago, to make light of Lubbock's proposal of the Hundred Best Books, and it perhaps failed of its effect. But there was a root of good about it.

What of the Oxford course, the ordinary pass course, with, say, a final school of honours flung in ? Was it—and is it—as bad as people say ; fit for the cockshy ourselves loved to make it in those days ? Certainly cram—getting up your subjects by hard reading, with or without the alleged wet towel round the head a few weeks before the

exam.—carried many a man through Smalls, and even pass Mods ; whereas steady reading and application, and never cutting a lecture, found some men after the event without their *testamur*—that blessed, cursed scrap of paper we went to the schools to ask for (or sent our scout to ask for) when all was over. This seems like a condemnation of the system ; but it ought to be added that the man who crammed, and got through, either knew from the start more Latin, Greek and Mathematics—or was a quicker and more confident hand—than the man who read steadily, and was ploughed for his pains.

There distinctly was an exam. which encouraged cramming, namely, the religious one, near the close of the three to four years' course at Oxford. I cannot remember whether it was nicknamed Rudders then and Divvers later, or the reverse order. It included the Gospels and the Acts in Greek—an interesting test, I thought—the Thirty Nine Articles, Paley's "Evidences," and a few questions in Old Testament history. You had to know the Articles word for word by heart. What was worse, the Old Testament history was of a hard date and fact kind, which lent itself to cramming. If you did not trust to cramming yourself, but hired a man to cram you, he insisted on your learning by heart certain things likely or almost sure to be set.

There was a story of a man who was told by his crammer, "You must learn up by heart, with their dates, the Kings of Judah and Israel ; that is the grand essential to success." The man obeyed. He learnt them up so that he knew them flawlessly, backwards as well as forwards.

When the Old Testament paper was set on his table he looked through it, but saw no question about the reigns and sequence of these kings—he found to his disgust there was a "cease of majesty" through the entire paper.

But he was asked, "What do you know of Elijah and Elisha? Distinguish between them."

His reply ran : "Far be it from me to draw an invidious comparison between two such eminent men as

Elijah or Elisha ; but the following is a correct list of the Kings of Judah and Israel."

There is a germ of truth in that monstrous story. I myself crammed, not the Kings, but the whole of the Articles. I was ploughed once. Then, annoyed and humiliated, I proceeded to cram harder, and I got through easily next time. I believe that exam. has been entirely changed or abolished.

As to other pass exams. at Oxford, I think they have often been criticised too harshly. It is urged that we never get more than a smattering of Latin and less Greek through an Oxford pass course ; that we forget most of it within a few years. Another argument against Latin and Greek, which applies equally to the honour course in Mods and Finals, is that these subjects are not practical, not useful. What is the use, it is asked, of our packing our heads with a lot of musty old Latin and Greek, dead languages which no nation speaks ?

Now, first as to the statement that to pass Smalls and Mods in Latin and Greek implies only a smattering. I agree that neither exam. gives a man a grip of the languages. Few passmen at Oxford could translate freely unseen passages from Latin or Greek authors ; I certainly could not ; and in my time the Oxford Schools attached too much importance to grammar, to its curiosities or irregularities. I was conscious of wasting time on the grammatical side.

Another defect, apart from classics, was the incomplete study of logic. Logic is often sneered at by practical people. I have heard, *proh pudor*, Mr. Asquith himself, in a speech, slightly gird at logic—Mr. Asquith, one of the most loyal and leading Oxonians during the last half century ! Yet, logic is a true intellectual exercise—a corrective against loose, slipshod thinking. What was the Oxford custom ? You took deductive logic for pass Mods, and, having got your *testamur*, never opened a book or attended a lecture on inductive logic, the most valuable side of the subject. That was my lot. I was interested in logic, read it with more

curiosity than I had for algebra and other subjects, found not the smallest difficulty with my logic paper in Mods—and at that my course closed. I never studied inductive logic at Oxford, and have not had the chance to take it up since. That was a bad side to the pass school.

As to classics, it is true most of us get only a smattering, and in later life we lost much of that. But I have not the faintest doubt that this little Latin and less Greek is far better for many men than no Latin and no Greek. Personally, I got delight from at least one classical subject I took at Oxford—five books of the *Odyssey*. I got solid, enduring good from it; and if I were to-day a free man—that is, if I were not bound, for a livelihood, to labour in other fields—I should take up the *Odyssey* and steep myself in its glories once more. I should add to Homer some of the marvellous plays of the Greek tragedians. I should return to Virgil and to Horace, too. And I should learn the Greek alphabet anew.

I am not in favour of compulsory Greek at Oxford; I am in favour of Greek.

What about the scornful statement that Latin and Greek are dead languages, and that men, instead of packing their heads with such nonsense, should learn really useful things, should learn modern commercial languages, etc.? It is better, in answering this argument, to show one's hand at once. Better speak out.

The objection is not only a crass and huckstering one; it is also a stupid man's objection. I hate it, always have, always shall. Education does not mean the training of boys that they may grow up sharp fellows who can make piles of money, and incidentally "do each other in." Not at all. People who think it is, mistake Faginism for education. "Pinching" one another's handkerchiefs or the handkerchiefs of old gentlemen looking into shops; growing up smart fellows who can make piles of money, and pilfer within the law; that has nothing to do with education, out-

side the schools in which Fagin of "Oliver Twist" and Bitzer of "Hard Times" practised.*

I am not against commerce and a commercial training. I admire commerce respectfully and wish I had a minute share of it. Nor am I against science and a scientific training; as to the latter, I hope it will be strengthened at Oxford. But the view that to educate a man should mean fitting him to "get on in the world," and knock out competitors, etc., is altogether too beastly. I would not train my dog to do it. If that spirit is inspired into Oxford, Oxford will perish. It is the spirit that, beyond all, we have got to keep Oxford free from. We do not want her to bellow from her towers the enchantments of cut-throat competition; it would be better to level the towers to the ground and have done with Oxford. I hope that Lord Curzon and Mr. Asquith and Viscount Grey will make a great stand against any modernising of Oxford, which means that malignity. President Wilson would utterly oppose the thing, if he had a voice in the matter.

But, apart from the immorality of the proposal to bring Oxford up to date by making men graduate in sharp practice, observe its ignorance! Take this alleged dead Latin—why, it is some fifty per cent. of our live language! And what of French and Italian—have they no Latin? I have wandered and browsed in many fair fields of English literature since I was a child of twelve; but I recognise that I should understand my own language better if I had more Latin.

As to Greek, the language may be dead, but how are we to read Homer—who lives and is on Shakespeare's plane—without it? We cannot read Homer through Pope, or Cowper, or the Earl of Derby. I much doubt whether, despite Keats, we can read him through Chapman. Even Butcher and Lang are not quite Homer. Again, what of Greek art, thought, ideals? Even naked commercialism will agree that they live and count to-day.

* The large soul of Charles Dickens, how it would have revolted against the plan for making the rising generation sharp fellows! I am always sorry to hear Dickens discounted by anyone who is on the side of the angels.

You cannot turn Oxford into an up-to-date, sharp University, glorified or other, without killing her. Those who know anything about her libraries and schools, her architecture, her old world of living traditions, her winning moods and manners, must agree about that. She would be ludicrously mis-built, mis-booked, for such a career.

Where we are not agreed is what is to become of Oxford in this coming reconstruction. What can we do to shield her in the coming, new tumult of society? Some voices urge, "Commercialise her, abolish the Latin and Greek, away with the humanities, in order that she may not be quite slain." Others would sit still and do nothing; or feebly lean on this broken reed of hope—that democracy will suffer Oxford to go on in the old way as a reward for the manner in which her sons have served in the war. I heard one of these despairers say, during the war, that he was glad to see the cadets there, because later they may, in gratitude for her hospitality, shield her from any "red fool-fury of the Seine."

I urge that we should neither sit still and hope despairingly, nor vulgarise and slay Oxford by introducing into her a school of "getting on in the world." There is only one way. We should conserve her glories and her spiritual and aesthetic life by opening them up to the masses of the country—to the really poor people. After all, Oxford in the Middle Ages was the University of the whole nation. Let us return to that. This can be done by the State endowment of some hundreds of scholarships reserved for those who have had their first teaching at the elementary schools. Let us do this, and we shall find no further danger of Oxford being vulgarised and spoilt by unabashed profiteering. She will discover in the democrats not foes but defenders. Democracy—I do not mean millionaires' sons posing as democrats; I mean poor working people who are natural democrats—will spare Oxford and jealously guard her, if we take this step in time. Such hostility as the poor man, the working class, has to Oxford exists

only through the feeling that he is not wanted there, is kept out. In one of the great working cities in the North, last year, I was talking about coming changes with a leader of Socialism—Mr. Nimlin, Secretary of the Engineers & Boilermakers' Federation of Clydeside. Somehow we touched on the universities and their higher education, their humanities.

Mr. Nimlin said to me : " Why should you, through some accident of birth and privilege, have enjoyed that more than one of us ? "

He did not intend hostility to me. If he had, I might have retorted that I, " privileged " or not, had been forced to make my small livelihood by incessant toil, assuredly not less than himself. His question was blunt and fair. I replied that I happened to be in favour of bringing into Oxford a large number of the children of the working classes. I suppose that Oxford had about fifteen hundred undergrads on her books before the war. Well, the State should see to it that thirty to fifty per cent. of the undergrads at Oxford are the sons of the working classes.

Steel-plate makers, riveters, shipwrights, miners, farm-labourers, builders, railway workers—they should all have, for the first time, a reasonable chance of seeing their sons at Oxford.

The working classes deserve it. I have seen a great deal during the last two years of the efforts of labour in the war. I have been through scores of shipyards, steel-shops, munition factories, and seen the men at work, incessant, heavy, grinding work ; and I have seen the same class fighting in France and Italy. Any old prejudice I had against labour disappeared in the light of their achievements at the forge of Vulcan and on the field of Mars. I came to understand clearly that the war was a working man's war. He fought it, he won it. We shall not only spare Oxford by introducing democracy—real democracy of the working and the poor—we shall give her a new and vigorous lease of life.

Will the working classes, once they enter Oxford, vote

for the abolition of the humanities there ; will they insist on the establishment of a school of sharp practice, of the Fagins and Bitzers, instead ? No ; that is exactly what they will prevent. I found no spirit of the kind about them during the war, either at the fronts or at the base. There is much romance among the thoughtful sections of the working classes, a grave desire to reach up, not so much to the wealthier but the higher life. The British working man is something of a dreamer, too—and is not Oxford a world of dreams ?

I am told that the old idea we nursed of Oxford as a school of life—a school *mostly* for the privileged—must be abandoned. I think that true. It cannot be again the old Oxford in that respect—and that was an interesting side of the place. But, if we bring in heartily the working poor, we shall conserve the spiritual and old learned side, and that after all it is the more ancient and essential side.

What of “ the Oxford tradition ” in public life, in politics, of which we have had many hard criticisms of late ? It was still powerful in my time ; and at Oxford, none of us thought to question it. Perhaps Lord Milner, who has sympathy and cultivation, was taken for the classic example of Oxford in public life, though there have been others on the pedestal. There is no doubt that we did complacently regard Oxford as essential to public life, to its purity, patriotism and intelligence. Oxford was the school of life through which all our potential Pitts and Cannings should pass smoothly in the ascendant before taking up the reins of Empire, if that Empire were to remain great. We accepted the Oxford tradition as a matter of course.

Now-a-days, voices are often raised against the thing—raised so shrill they sometimes break. They vow that the Oxford tradition has been the tradition of privileged prigs and of dying feudalism. Regarding the thing dispassionately, I see that the value of the tradition in politics and public life can be put too high ; and that the continuance of the British Empire by no means depends upon it. On the other hand, I notice

that some of its most indignant critics have not come out of the war as nobly as have the two old Universities. One cannot help suspecting, in much of the bitter criticism or railing against Oxford, *spetæ injuria formæ*. The two leading men at home in the management of the war and the Empire, it is remarked by Oxford's critics, were not of the tradition—Lloyd George and Bonar Law. Nor Mr. Hughes, nor any of the Labour Leaders who have been essential to us in the war. That is true. Oxford and Cambridge—and Eton and Harrow and Winchester—are not altogether on the top in public life to-day; though they have a great roll of honour in the battle-field. And yet, I believe that if Mr. Lloyd George, or Mr. Bonar Law, or Mr. Hughes were asked to give his opinion of the Oxford tradition, some of the critics might be disappointed.

The Oxford tradition and the old University school of life are closed. They will never be re-opened. In a sense, Oxford has to do what the statesman reminded us England can never do—begin again. But I am far from persuaded that England and the Empire have suffered in their evolution through that tradition and school of life. They are in English history even as the feudalism, the knight-errantry, the guilds, of the Middle Ages; even as the pageant of the Elizabethan days; and the unreckoning loyalty of King Charles's Cavaliers. If they have lived their life, they have served a nobler purpose than impatient and superficial observers think. I have talked more than once within the last year or two with working-men socialists, now and then with men in whom I half suspected the revolutionary intention; and I have found them far blacker against anything like a reign of money than a reign of Oxford or of some picturesque relic of feudalism.

I have said that at Oxford I got in with a non-reading set. But that was not the only thing that kept me from working. The fact is, I wished for the life of sensation, intellectual and other; a reaction, I suppose, from the dismal deeps in which lately I had been plunged. I

played billiards, for one thing, too much, having discovered before I went to Oxford, a facility in that game. I could make seventy or eighty at billiards, and I have taken fourteen balls at pyramids in a single break. That was not helpful in the schools. Then I played a certain amount of chess in the evenings. We had a chess club in St. Giles, to which Ruskin used to come. He was not a sound, he was a whimsical player. Ruskin was then giving a short series of lectures in the Oxford Museum, and I was fascinated by their matter and their manner. He talked of birds, and I never heard anyone talk quite so winningly on that subject; his lecture on birds was as fine as some of the Japanese sketches of birds. His queer falsetto voice seemed to add to the charm of his talking. The whole performance was lyric, like his marvellous description of the pure stream at Carshalton polluted by the wicked.

Another series of lectures I attended in part was John Addington Symonds's—at Magdalen, I think. Symonds, like Ruskin, had a feeble voice. He exercised on me no Ruskin spell. I ought to have valued his lectures, but somehow they made little appeal to me. The only regular lecturer I was interested by was A. H. Johnson of All Souls. His lectures on the French Revolution and Napoleon held me. I did my best not to miss *them*. I also liked his lectures on the Georges. Johnson was my tutor for the History School, and on one occasion he was surprised and pleased by my papers in Collections. He sent for me, told me they were well on towards a second—some had been marked B, others B+—and that, with style, they might work up into a first. I think I did work—for the inside of a week, at any rate—on the strength of that. I believed in Johnson and his lectures. One could imagine, visualise, somewhat the 1789-1815 period whilst he was speaking. As to style, however, I should to-day split a lance, respectfully, with him over that. What passed for style in Oxford examination papers was, at its best, a nice form—implying accuracy, care, thoughtful work. I think it likely that Ruskin's papers showed style;

Pater's and Wilde's. But as to firsts, how many of them have been got by men as innocent of style as of poetry ! Style is a rarer man than the Oxford first.

It was about the time I left Oxford that one day at the bookstall I bought "Longman's Magazine," and read therein "The Pageant of Summer." Now, there was style ! I had not read anything of Richard Jefferies before, except perhaps some of his unsigned papers in "The Standard," and the wonder of this thing took me by storm. It was not till years later that I read "Amaryllis at the Fair," a story deep in parts as Thomas Hardy, and infinitely beautiful. But I understood at once that here was one of the masters, high privileged of the gods. Thoreau was great, Jefferies was greater than Thoreau. I shall not forget that railway journey in the company of one of my new prophets—for Jefferies was nothing if not the prophet. I forgot Emerson and Carlyle, and for a time everyone, in the inspired author of "The Pageant of Summer."

Sometimes one turns back again to these great authentic writers after leaving them for years, curious—and not without misgiving—to discover if the thrall is still there. I turn back to Jefferies, to his "Bits of Oak Bark," or "Meadow Thoughts"; there was no illusion or crude judgment about our early zeal there at any rate; this was one of the immortals. But there is Jefferies and Jefferies. "The Gamekeeper at Home" is an agreeable book; "Amaryllis," "The Story of My Heart," and "My Old Village" are works of pure genius.

CHAPTER V

POLITICS AND JOURNALISM

A CURIOUS illusion to-day, widespread, is that, now the war is over, there will be a reaction, and we shall return to something very much like our social life and politics before 1914. One friend told me a year or so ago that he was anxious to get the road-tarring nuisance put right, so that, when peace came, we might settle down to some good trout-fishing: at present the tar is being washed into the streams, destroying the food of the fish, and diminishing valuable sporting rights. Another friend was concerned about labour. He feared it would end by eating us all up. He did not see how we could safely get down the terrible wage bill. But he took heart a little later. William, his man, was called up in 1916, served in France, and returned home in 1918 on sick leave. William told the story of his experiences on the Somme, and ended—the innocent!—by declaring to his master that he should never grumble again when asked to take the motor out on Sunday, or do an extra hour's work in the house or grounds. So his master turned optimist from pessimist. This "dreadful war" was, after all, not so dreadful as it seemed. The trout water worth a hundred a mile would be saved. William would return to work thankfully on the old lines: after several years in the trenches it would be like a holiday for him to take the motor out, exceptionally, on Sunday.

A reformed William and the saved trout have been at the back of a good many minds in the city, in the shop, on the farm, in politics. Comfort was conveyed in the

fact that silver medal men were already back, and anxious for work. Was not Thomas the flyman for the Junction Hotel before the war ; and is he not back from France, plus the silver medal (if minus an arm), and flyman to-day for the Anchor Hotel in the same town ? Ergo—things are going to settle down after all on the same lines.

That, however, is illusion. Those deceived by it overlook the truth that the war is the first act only in the mightiest drama of evolution and revolution mingled which has been played since Christ was on the scene. The French Revolution, the Napoleonic wars and the diplomatically contrived settlement of Europe which closed that epoch—exploring them to-day, in view of what is afoot, is like travelling with Gulliver among the little folk of Lilliput. In the acts that follow the war, we shall see not only the status of William and Thomas, and the trout-fisheries of England modified, we shall soon be in the midst of profound changes in the whole system of politics, labour and society.

When the journalistic agitation for conscription was started in the autumn of 1914, I did not think we were crusading for anything besides a military system. But later, it one day flashed upon me that conscription must mean more than that. Would not compulsory military service compel, in the result, much more than military service ? I used to ponder over this question on Thursday after the "Saturday Review," which I was then editing, had been "made up," and I was left alone, sometimes far into the night, to read the later proofs, and to wind up my week's work. It dawned on me that if the State absolutely compelled millions of her lustiest sons to fight, and virtually compelled millions of others to work on munitions, the millions, in the end, would turn round and compel the State ! That is exactly what they will do. Consequently, our system of politics and society will be turned inside out.

Possibly a few people who resented the agitation, or tried to damp it down, had something of the kind at the back of their minds too, though I never heard the thought uttered then. It may have seemed to them

that in rushing this demand, Conservatives and Whigs were "asking for it"—playing with a vengeance the reformer's game. I almost felt I ought to have compunctions. But I did not succeed in cultivating any in the matter. The truth was that this conscription apart from its justice and fairness, was bound to come, soon or late. The strength of Germany had ensured that. The idea grew upon me that it would vastly affect and alter our habits of society, land, taxation, politics generally. It may be objected that conscription in France, in Germany at the time of Stein and Hardenberg, in America under Lincoln, did not turn everything inside out. But that was conscription in the old world—by which I include even the America of the 'sixties—when the strength of the masses had scarcely begun to seethe.

Why did socialists here fight conscription with tooth and nail ; and many of them exalt the voluntary system ? I suppose the answer is they hated the war, believed it was a capitalist war, and conscription a capitalists' move. One M.P. declared that the capitalist and upper classes wanted conscription in order to pay the conscripts, I think it was, a penny a day ; and there were others who saw more or less a sinister plot of that sort, among them Mr. W. C. Anderson, M.P., an able Labour representative. Yet, even so, it is odd they did not go into the thing, themselves lead it, recognising that conscription in 1914 would yield them a new world of politics and society long before 1924.

The changes need not necessarily be revolutionary—but they will be remarkably evolutionary. Soldiers and sailors will accept the assurances of statesmen, newspapers and the public that they have saved the country : and, being *Angli non Angeli*, they will insist on their share in "half the good things which make life worth living." They may take that share mainly through, not the sword, but the vote. The vote for every soldier and sailor, when first mooted in 1915, rather shook some of the old school. One was told that "a good many of our fellows" in the House thought

that was going too far. But there were men regarded as members of that old school who saw at once that a great, generous measure of enfranchisement must come and *ought* to come. One evening after dinner, Lord Middleton came and talked politics with me, and he spoke at once of the justice of giving all soldiers and sailors the vote, asked me my views, and expressed hearty approval when I said I was all for a full vote. He made not the least reservation, and spoke of it without fear. Lord Middleton was right about sundry things in the war, but his instinct was never sounder than on this question of the vote.

The old House of Commons will be reformed—as drastically as itself reformed the House of Lords. Perhaps it will, after the change, bear as much likeness to the House of the 'eighties or 'nineties as the National Assembly of 1793 bore to the Parliament of Paris. But it will be interesting to recall the old House, its habits, its full-dress debates, as one recalls—

“Old far-off forgotten things and battles long ago.”

I began to take some interest in politics, soon after I was out of long clothes. That was owing to the frequent political talk at home. They were regular old “Standard” type Conservatives there. A fear of Joseph Arch reigned in those parts when he dared to visit St. Mary Bourne and preach rebellion against 14s. a week for the agricultural labourers. Dr. Steevens, our local archaeologist, sprang to the rescue in 1874 with a tract on the farm labourer. Was he not able to prove that the ordinary labourer earned something over £46 a year all told? And could he not contrast to good effect this man's lot with the ceorls and sockmen of Saxon, and the villeins of Norman times in our district?

The strike died out. But, later, came a still greater scare, the Henry George movement, talked of with bated breath among our north Hampshire hills. The poaching question, too, was at its height then, and that

was nothing if not political. In the 'seventies my tutor eagerly read the Parliamentary debates—I suspect him, with his admiration for Lord Lytton, to have been an historical Liberal; though a covert one, for he liked the family and the rabbit-shooting. One day, procuring tickets from a policeman, he took me to the Strangers' Gallery. I saw Gladstone, Disraeli, Bright, and all three made a few remarks. I was initiated. But Lytton did not dazzle me, out of "Rienzi." I remembered the poachers of New Street, Andover, their lurchers, their guns that could be taken to pieces and stowed in side pockets: and the Arch and George peril had laid hold of my imagination. I should say I was then an adherent of property Conservatism against my tutor's historical Liberalism.

At Oxford, in my first year, I fell into William Stead's "Pall Mall Gazette" clutches, in some degree, I think, to annoy one of my freshmen friends, a man who had less farthings of his own in the world even than myself, but was a fierce Tory with high principles. I appear to have been pulled out of the Stead pit by the Honours School of Modern History, which converted me into something like an historical Liberal.

It is humiliating to have to own to so many changes of political raiment: only what can a youngster do when poachers, land agitators, tutors, family environment, miscellaneous and irregular reading of all manner of books, and college lecturers are all pulling in various directions? Was even the great William Pitt, Chancellor of the Exchequer at twenty or so, really so reasonably convinced and settled about it all?

After Oxford, I went out into the world to seek a living. The idea of being supported was disgusting to me. My degree was not showy enough for any chance of one of the better posts in the Civil Service. The law and the medical profession implied some money at least. I had none. The Church asked for a firm belief in Revelation. I had none. The idea of a regular school-master life repelled me. I tried the competition for cadetship in the Royal Irish Constabulary, coached

myself for a few weeks in the subjects to be set, and went over to Dublin to be examined. We first had to pass the doctor. He overhauled and rejected me, I think because I was suffering from a sprain through a fall whilst skating. I argued with the doctor, he grew impatient, and then a singular thing happened—he passed me. He would not be bothered by discussing it any longer. But passing the other examination was a different thing. The subjects included history, handwriting, dictation, *précis*, and long tots. Long tots, a surprise to me, consisted in trying to get on to paper, as fast as they were given *viva voce*, by a man with a strong brogue, long rows of millions, and hundreds and tens of thousands. Then the torturer took out his watch, and we had to add up against time. I received a duck's egg for that paper.

I floundered over one or two other subjects. To my annoyance, I found that history—in which I had lately taken an honour degree at Oxford—was clearly not my *métier*. I had to answer some singular questions as to the relationship of Royal Families, such as Queen Philippa's cousins. I got not much more than a duck's egg for that paper. Oddly, I came out at or near the proud top in *précis*, which I had just crammed up in a hurry, and in handwriting which had brought me into contempt at home and Oxford. But in the result I retired, foiled.

What did Oxford youth in those days—and probably up to August 4th, 1914—do as a rule when there was no immediate or prospective opening? It took to coaching other youths, who, in turn, found themselves presently in the same position. So, after an anxious search and many rebuffs, I found pupils and taught them, not long tots or Queen Philippa's relationships, but the usual Latin and less Greek. But whilst I taught, I was looking for some other work—anything to get me out into the broad world. I would have taken the office of Astronomer Royal had it been offered to me, though not knowing which was Lyra and what stars lit the belt of Orion. But, unlike Carlyle in youth,

I did not apply for the post. I applied for a secretaryship or two. I just missed going to India as a judge's private secretary, through failure to teach myself Pitman's shorthand in a few weeks. Disgusted, I leaned to the City. The promoter of a new pill-wrapping company wished to engage me. He was enthusiastic over a scheme which would offer pills to the consumer here and in the United States, of which he was a citizen, in an inviting form. Instead of taking your pill out of a box full of nasty powder, you would take it out a neat little paper wrap. A fortune was in the thing, but it was necessary for the secretary to invest £150 before beginning to draw his salary of, I think, £250 a year. The promoter was attractive and entertaining, but the £150 was to seek. I made some inquiries, and was advised by a friend in touch with a public company for detecting other and fraudulent public companies that the venture was a wrong one. Whereupon I had some angry words with the pill man, and we ceased to be on talking terms. Later, the friend brought me a newspaper cutting, which showed the pill-wrapper had just been sentenced to time for inducing one or more applicants for that secretaryship to invest £150 in the company that never started. The judge told the jury that the evidence did point to a belief of the man in his scheme, an endeavour to start the company. Nevertheless, the pill-wrapper had to go to prison.

Several years after, walking in the Strand, I met the man, evidently just out. I saw he recognised me. But we passed each other by. That was an interesting, clever man. Nor do I believe he was at heart a common cheat. It is easy for the comfortable moralizers to condemn all cases of the kind. The "haves," for whom life has been made simple by its lottery, are often so fond of branding the duplicity of the "have-nots." Anyhow, I hope my pill-wrapper acquaintance made good, grew to be a prosperous, irreproachable "have." True, he proposed to draw my problematic hundred and fifty. But he was a bright talker; and the evidence at least showed he did believe in his pill-wraps.

What next? I had failed in long tots and Queen Philippa; I could not cultivate artificially a belief in Revelation and "go into the Church"—an expression which, for some reason I never could divine, shocked one of my old tutors. I was too late for the Army, the profession I had fancied: besides, the tradition was strong in my family that a man could not live on his pay. Virtually, all the other regular callings demanded some outlay of money. So I drifted.

Pondering over those personal experiences, and the hard ones of old friends for whom the world proved too much, has recalled to me three poignant words of Stephen Blackpool in "Hard Times," that noble work of a master whom a few lettered prigs and many ignoramuses say they cannot read: "*Aw a Muddle!*" I have been largely an individualist most of my life. I remain one—though with big reservations. A man should dree his own weird, whatever a mouse should do. He had best wrestle out his way in life as he had best wrestle it out in the way of faith, religious convictions. I agree with John Stuart Mill. I agree even with Smiles—though a good deal of Smiles may be smug—that self-help is better for a man, if he is to grow up a full man, than State-help. But the unhappy fact about our system of society to-day is that individualism is given on the whole such a dog's chance. Society does not suffer the individualist anything like a fair field unless he has genius, or exceptional force, at least. He is handicapped by competitors as eager as himself, some or many of whom are pushed by influence, by money, by name. The thoughtless are fond of saying that the survival of the fittest is the right method, and that we should wilt away as a nation if we adopted Socialism. Especially we hear this said by prosperous people who have inherited many possessions. But, as a child can see, there is not, there never has been, such a law as the survival of the fittest working in human life. There was no such law in feudal times, still less is there such a law in the modern commercial carnage, styled peace. I say this in no spirit of rancour, but

because I feel it absolutely true. Glancing back and calling up the figures and faces of contemporaries and friends who have failed in that competition—which tramples souls to pieces if it does not, like the other competition, war, trample bodies—I recognise that the existing system is a cruel and an inefficient one: inefficient for the State, cruel for the man and woman. It is a welter; it is “aw’ a muddle,” like the chain of senseless events which sent Stephen Blackpool into the pit. What Mill wrote seventy years ago on that head is just as true to-day. He was speaking of hired labourers in industry and agriculture. But it is true, too, of other classes.

I drifted, as a good many Oxford men before and since have done, out of coaching into journalism by way of politics. I chanced to see an advertisement for a private secretary to an M.P., answered it, and found C. E. Howard Vincent waiting for me at 1, Grosvenor Square. He chanced to choose me. Historical Liberalism had left me, and I found myself with “nothing to conserve or preserve,” a Conservative, though the vogue at the time—the end of the ’eighties—among young men from Oxford and elsewhere was scarcely Conservatism. So I was his man.

I liked Vincent. He gave me the free run of the Members’ Gallery. He put me in touch with detectives who had served under him at Scotland Yard. They took me round the cryptic streets of Soho and eastward where criminals and indigent aliens lurked, and into the strange little shops to which watched men had their letters addressed. I cannot say any of the detectives I saw then or after, were half as diverting as Inspector Bucket of “Bleak House”: the thrall of the detective is chiefly fiction. Still, I enjoyed the experience. Also, Vincent (who, in the language of snobbery, “knew everybody worth knowing”) showed me the interiors of some of the great houses of London. I may say I saw them once, at parties of which *minima pars fui*. But I should object to a reader stressing the “once” as Oscar Wilde did when speaking of a

friend : he said, " X has been in every great house in London once."

I worked for Vincent two or three sessions, grew to know the ropes in party politics, and then started on Parliamentary journalism. For seven or eight years I concerned myself, in journalistic and other capacities, with party politics and with Parliament. I had the right to enter the Member's Lobby with a pass for the Press gallery, and I came to know through the House and the clubs, a large number of politicians in all the parties. It is a school of life, or a class in the school of life, entertaining, busy, but narrow. A man may become engrossed by it, which means loss of perspective : this was true of the House and party politics before the war, but to-day the blindest devotee to Parliament cannot fail to perceive it. Suppose a lesser operation on one of the war fronts, not even mentioned in official despatches, could be described in detail by a powerful and brilliant pen, the result would be far more vital than any account of the " biggest " debate in the House of Commons or House of Lords that has been in our time. It would be of how incomparably greater dramatic human interest ! The first war scene I saw was during the Somme—one of the decisive battles of the world, because it decided that we could attack the flower of the great Germany Army in its strongest positions, and drive it ultimately off the field. I came up from Amiens and walked about at the edge of Englebelmer Wood. I watched our guns pounding Thiepval : and an hour of that marvellous, glittering pageant was of more worth and interest than an aeon of Parliaments.

I must say something first about the party game pure and simple—and get it off the chest. The party game, at least as it has come to be played, is a trivial occupation. Strong men were doing all sorts of light tasks at the outbreak of war, which, as we have seen during the war, girls and boys can do equally well. But I know of nothing so barren, so useless to the State, as the petty selfish intrigues of this party game. I

once heard Lord Curzon break out against "the rot of party politics." That was excellent English, but what politics is there in the party game? Politics is a noble vocation. The word, however, like other Greek words, has become immoral, owing to the game which is played about it. Lord Salisbury, in paying honour to Mr. Middleton, the organizer of the Unionist Party, spoke about "that which is called a wirepuller," an irony which might have been barbed had it not carried a cheque for a thousand pounds. The wire-pulling business, with its network of whips, agents, local associations, etc., has been responsible for the party game; and, until this caucus or machine has been broken up, the game will still be played. The serious politician despises it, but he avails himself of it, for the game is played by many besides the Tadpoles and Tapers whom Disraeli satirized.

I have seen enough of the party game and the party point of view to regard them as "rot."

The days of that sort of thing are numbered. There will, of course, be parties—the chief ones, perhaps, being Haves and Have-nots, by whatever more dignified title they may describe themselves—but the public has learnt during the war too much about the old machinery to suffer much longer its imbecilities and intrigues. The practice of the party manoeuvring of large masses of M.P.'s, driving them idea-less and principle-less to the Lobbies—as the German soldier was popularly represented as having always been driven to the slaughter—is for fools. Free Houses and tied votes are too incongruous.

Not that the five-lined whip invariably secures servility. It has happened that a member has stood out and defied the whip. As a rule, he has only been able to persist in independence where he has been a dominating personality in his constituency. Mere intellectual distinction or political consistency has rarely served in a contest against the party machine. I witnessed, in the House, an amusing incident of a rebel taking the field against the machine. He was a

Ministerialist, who on several occasions had been angrily attacking his own side, and, one night during a debate on the Scotch Estimates, he was especially truculent, to the hilarious delight of the Opposition, and the discomfort of his own side. He kept the House up till midnight. A knot of Ministerialists and their opponents were gathered on the platform of the Underground Railway at Westminster, waiting the last train west. The Lord Advocate for Scotland, clever at his work, but a man who did not gladly suffer opposition from sheep in his own pen, joined them. Everyone on the railway platform was talking about the conduct of the offending member ; what could it all mean ?

The Lord Advocate, his voice intentionally raised, said : " O, the fellow is furious because we will not give him a knighthood. He has been in and out of the whips' room of late, pestering them to make him a knight."

So the Minister got even with the member ; though, in the end, the member, I believe, procured his knighthood all right. Knighthoods, etc., are, beyond doubt, sometimes asked for, and the machine undoubtedly has been the medium of their bestowal. They may even be asked for openly, though by no means necessarily granted. One of the organizers of a patriotic league proposed to a colleague that they should go direct to Downing Street, and ask for knighthoods.

The colleague replied firmly : " Rather than do such a thing, I would undress and walk stark-naked down Regent Street at midday." A straight man that.

The custom of asking for and obtaining honours for party services rendered is doomed, whether the honours are paid for or not. We have jested much about the giving of iron crosses during the war, but has it been more ridiculous than the pre-war bestowal on civilians in our own country of knighthoods, etc., for party services ? There is a story of the great Lord Derby, " The Rupert of Debate," which, true or not, is characteristic. A colleague was protesting against debasing the honour list.

"What does it matter?" replied Lord Derby, "I would fling them honours, if they want them, as one flings cabbages to the swine."

That is the cynic's point of view, but decent people have grown to regard it in another light.

I was working at the House for about ten years, and heard most of the chief debates. The most arresting personality during that period was Parnell. He alone of any politician I have ever heard or seen had the magic of genius. One imagined him as touched with a kind of demoniac force. In a book entitled "The Tragedy of a Life," published in Ireland some years ago, there is a particularly interesting photograph of Parnell, sitting in his laboratory, the pestle in his hand: chemistry seemed the fitting relaxation for a character like that, aloof and dark. His speeches in the House, including several during or immediately after the Special Commission, left on one no lasting impression. "Speaking in deeds" was Parnell's province; he had not the manner nor the oratory for Parliaments, though, towards the close of his life, he exercised a spell on the House whenever he spoke there. The most dramatic scene I witnessed in ten years' experience of both Houses was late at night or early in the morning directly after the adjournment of the Irish Party's meeting in Committee Room 15. I think it was in 1890, possibly 1891. Parnell came down the passage that leads from the Library to the Lobby. He was alone, and, as it happened, there was no one in the Lobby but myself. He stood irresolutely there as if all will of physical movement had left him; forlorn, emaciated, deadly white, very shabby, a strange, unearthly figure that seemed to have distilled the very essence of passion. He moved more like a sleep-walker than a man with all his faculties about him, and looked rapt away from things ordinary and wordly. After a few moments, he appeared to recall himself, and passed through the swing door into darkness. Parnell, in those last desperate passages of his life, appeals more to my imagination than any political leader in his century, save one who was his

antithesis in most respects—William Pitt, broken-hearted after Austerlitz and dying alone.

I have heard only one orator of the front rank, Gladstone. Many speakers of the 'eighties and 'nineties—among them mediocrists—have been spoken and written of as orators, but they were facile or glib speakers not more. Next to Gladstone, the Duke of Argyll, Lord Rosebery and David Plunkett were the best performers in pure oratory ; but they were not of the same class as Gladstone. There were speakers, who, on their day or night, were as entertaining to hear as Gladstone—unless it chanced to be Gladstone at his best—such as Dr. Wallace and Tim Healy, with their wit and pungency ; but they had not the polish and the silverness, they could not run through the whole gamut of emotion, and they did not attempt the classic ornament and quotation—which, together, make what we name oratory. Theirs was the oratory of Philistia only.

My belief, from what I have read, heard and imagined, is that Gladstone has never been surpassed, if matched, in the House of Commons purely as orator. Chatham may have been his superior in histrionics, more tragical and aquiline. The younger Pitt clearly was not Gladstone's equal in oratory, though I believe him to have been, apart from oratory, a consummate man. William Hazlitt's critique of Pitt was jaundiced and partisan, but so clever that one is rather shaken intellectually in the reading of it.

To convince his readers, Hazlitt accompanied his character sketch of the younger Pitt with a character sketch of Chatham, whom he eulogised. But we can see to-day, what Hazlitt could or would not, that the son's long struggle against Napoleon was a more heroic achievement even than the father's splendid military triumphs in the three Continents at war, and in swiftly setting England at the forefront of European nations. At any rate, the younger Pitt, as politician of action, has had no Parliamentary rival in the last hundred and twenty years. Canning, a bright spirit, was merely of his tradition, whilst Castlereagh was a dull, plodding,

though resolute figure. In the last generation there was the amazing cleverness of Disraeli, though that was chiefly in words and Parliamentary fence, and later the wayward talents and pluck of Randolph Churchill. But they and the others fenced with one another—and it was always the fence of words. Whereas Pitt fought Napoleon.

In debate, Chamberlain, setting aside Gladstone—who excelled in debate as in pure oratory—was far the most effective figure throughout the later 'eighties and the 'nineties, and in fact till his appalling and utter collapse during the tariff reform crusade. He had every weapon in the armoury of Parliamentary thrust and parry. Perhaps his best art was exposition. He knew exactly what to put into and what to leave out of his speeches when explaining a new bill or a policy. He never rambled, he was never diffuse, he was finely clear-cut. No matter what the audience he addressed, Chamberlain presented his case from start to finish in language which educated and uneducated people could alike hear and read with pleasure. It was easy to follow him without intellectual effort, no matter what the theme. That is one of the chief secrets of the great speaker, whether orator or debater. He dare not be illusive. Illusiveness is one of the choicer arts in literature ; in public speech it is fatal. It is the great writer's privilege to be difficult, to make even his devoted readers pause and struggle at times, and to make fools flounder. For instance, reading Meredith, we are fearful of overlooking some subtle *nuance*, even on pages where all appears fairly plain sailing. But the orator's and debater's appeal is ever to the many, the thickheads, not to the fastidious few. And this applies alike to the Parliamentary and platform audience. Chamberlain was so clear that some people proclaimed him shallow. I certainly do not think he was deep. But this common metaphor derived from the stream is wrong, for shallow waters are not invariably clear : they often run turbid.

Chamberlain was quick as a flash in retort, and vindictive when interrupted. He would turn aside for a

moment to fling a javelin at the interrupter, then ("cool as a cucumber," as I once heard him describe himself in a broil) resume his argument. His javelins always drove home. It might happen occasionally, in the heat of debate, that they did not go home in the right breast. A private member ensconced on a back bench under one of the side galleries interjected a hostile remark once when Chamberlain was speaking. Chamberlain whipped round, and savagely flung one of his javelins at a London Liberal M.P., whom he took to be the offender. The latter rose, smarting, and expostulated that he never interrupted speakers; and that, were he to do so, the last person he should choose to interrupt would be Chamberlain. Meanwhile the little Jew who had interrupted with effect, sat tight and grinned.

But Chamberlain reserved the hardest punishments for those who had been personally attacking him, till he rose after they had sat down. J. M. Maclean, a clever Conservative free lance, was bitter against Chamberlain. He believed that Lord Salisbury would have found a place for him in the Coalition Government had not Chamberlain imported into that Government too many Liberal Unionists, as a bodyguard. So he worked up and got off an effective attack on Chamberlain. Later, Chamberlain rose and shot, in passing, one dart at Maclean. With a shrug of contempt towards where Maclean was sitting on a corner seat below the gangway on his own side, he remarked that of course it was easy for those who "wanted to make personal attacks" to criticise his policy. It seemed a small thing, but it went home, Maclean half rising with an indignant gesture, then collapsing.

On another occasion, Mr. Robertson, who, in a recent Government, had been Civil Lord of the Admiralty (a post Louis Jennings described as reserved for men who, in consideration of its £1,000 a year, would keep their mouths shut in the House and open in the country) attacked Chamberlain in a long, prepared speech. He stood during his attack in the seat usually filled by the Leader of the Opposition, and made considerable

play with the box on the table, slapping it hard in denouncing Chamberlain. He was rapturously cheered. That evening, Chamberlain rose to reply to several speeches. He recalled to the House that Robertson had been attacking him with much sound and display. He represented himself with a sneer as rather dumb-founded by the attack: and then he turned round and congratulated his son, Austen Chamberlain, on the great future obviously reserved for *him*. Austen Chamberlain was at the time Civil Lord of the Admiralty: the inference was that some day he, as an ex-Civil Lord, would be able to come down to the House, thump the box, and dispose of the leaders opposite. Whereupon the perfidious House, which had been laughing with the adventurous Robertson an hour or so earlier, laughed instead at his expense.

Chamberlain meant to punish in many cases, and did so without mercy. But a great deal of the sound and fury which front bench men rouse against front bench men signifies, in the party game, nothing. Their gigantomachy is only playful—the gods in office sporting with the gods outside office. It is done to impress innocent outsiders who mistake it for real warfare and impressive political sincerity; and also to keep up the spirits of their own followers in the House. There is no doubt about this among those who have watched the party game played at Westminster. I confess to having been completely taken in by it once. Chamberlain had been making some unauthorised speeches on foreign affairs whilst he and Lord Salisbury were in office together. Our relations with Russia were strained at the time; and Chamberlain, then Colonial Minister, had spoken of the need of having a long spoon when we supped with the devil—Russia. This speech had observably not been welcomed by Lord Salisbury, then Foreign Minister, on whose behalf it was made. Sir William Harcourt adroitly seized the opportunity and made much play in a clever speech in the House by contrasting Lord Salisbury's judicious or dry utterances on Russia with Chamberlain's "blazers." He

elaborated the point, and visibly scored. The Opposition were delighted, and even Chamberlain's own colleagues on the crowded Ministerialist front bench could not quite hide their smiles. Chamberlain sat still and took the punishment. When his turn came, he replied at once to the taunts.

"Perhaps," he said in effect, "there *is* something in what the Right Hon. gentleman has said. Lord Salisbury and myself may not see eye to eye in this matter." He paused for effect, stooped over the table, pointed a finger at where Sir William Harcourt sat, and resumed: "But at any rate, sir, there have been worse scandals than this. There has been the scandal of a leader of this House [Sir William Harcourt] and his leader in the other House [Lord Rosebery] *who were not on talking terms with one another!*"

Sir William Harcourt stirred uneasily and made a slight sign of contempt. Tories, Liberals, everyone shouted with laughter, for there had lately been persistent stories about Lord Rosebery not approving of his unmanageable colleague's Finance Act (Death Duties), but being quite overridden and reduced to impotence in leadership. Nevertheless, Chamberlain spent the following week-end with his old friend, Harcourt, at Malwood in the New Forest. After all, here was only another illustration of the party gods more or less at sport.

There is an understanding on the whole between the ins and outs, not detected by the mass of their enthusiastic supporters in the country. It rarely comes to anything like a real fight in the party business at Westminster: and, if ever it does—as in the case of the famous scuffle during Mr. Mellor's chairmanship—the gods are passive and pained spectators. The party battle is the exact opposite of the battles in the Middle Ages: then the few great and privileged ones, the true knights, closed in mortal combat whilst their lackeys looked on. Now the lackey fights and the knight looks on. Labouchere never tired of declaring that there was a secret bond between the leaders on both

sides, "the hidden hand" of his day. He may have exaggerated, but the point was true enough.

To forget, even when the Erinnyes of the Front Benches appear to be rending each other, that it is a game is to lose one's sense of humour. A General at the Front said to me one day, "We are not much impressed by the movements of the party leaders at home: their great wish seems to be to hurt each other." But they do not hurt each other so much as he ingenuously believed.

As an instance of the Front Benches understanding one another, and of there being between them some secret *liaison*, the attitude of Sir William Harcourt, and other leaders, during the South Africa Special Committee has often been cited. I suppose there was some sort of tacit understanding in that case that the past Colonial Office heads should not give away their party successors. Labouchere in that Committee cut an indifferent figure. He did not get enough support from his own leaders, and he merely succeeded in tackling and throwing one or two small witnesses. When Labouchere examined the prime culprit, Cecil Rhodes, he was made to look almost ridiculous. He failed to entangle or throw Rhodes. I had a ticket for this South Africa Committee in 1897, and I don't think I missed a meeting, for in those days I was greatly entertained by party politics. Rhodes as a witness had not shown much zest or spirit in answer to the questions of several members of the Committee, friendly and other, who questioned him. Oddly enough, he regarded Mr. Bigland—later Mr. Justice Bigland—as a hostile questioner, and was a little brusque in replying. I think George Wyndham told me that Rhodes had not grasped the fact that Bigland was a Government nominee on the Committee, and, therefore, a friend. Rhodes, it seems, was deceived by Bigland's unsympathetic manner. But when it was Labouchere's turn to question, Rhodes roused himself and showed lively curiosity. He told Labouchere he always read "Truth"—"in order to see my own faults." This

set the Committee tittering, but Labouchere looked put out.

Other singular little sallies of a like nature followed. The Committee laughed outright, and Labouchere went to pieces. He completely failed, and my impression is that his own colleagues at the table were, secretly, as well pleased at his downfall before Rhodes as, naturally, were Chamberlain, Wyndham and Co. Rhodes was a witness as difficult as Sam Weller. His *naïveté* and frankness disarmed the opponent. Then, after several hours of answering questions, he sent for sandwiches and a mug of porter; and, after answering several questions, would take an observably big bite out of his sandwich, the effect of which was broadly comic. Everyone round that table must have felt he was dealing with another kind of man than himself—and a man with a wider vision. I did not know Rhodes, never had an opportunity to speak to him, and I have lived long enough to suspect hero-worship—certainly in politics. But I believe Rhodes truly to have been a great and original man, with a vivid and childlike imagination. Some of the persons, however, whom he was followed by, his South Africa queue, were displeasing: they imagined only in gold and diamond mines and in company promotion and direction. Rhodes, moreover, was unfortunate in bringing to Oxford—the University he sincerely cherished—German scholars. The German fighting man, private or officer, and the German who stays and works in Germany, and backs his own country, is one proposition: the German Jews who come over here, and infest society, finance and trade, are quite another. After experience of the Front, we learn to discriminate between the hard-bitten and brave variety of enemy there and the variety of inquilines here.

Of the younger men in Parliament during these years, the ablest were Lloyd George, Samuel Evans, George Wyndham, George Curzon, Winston Churchill, Edward Grey and Hugh Cecil; and the cleverest of the group was Lloyd George. Directly Lloyd George spoke in the House, I saw he was exasperatingly clever and

vigorous, and sure to emerge. I was then writing a "London Letter" for several country papers, including the Cardiff "Western Mail," of which J. M. Maclean, M.P. owned a part. Maclean disliked my "puffing up" the young Welsh Radical Members, and told me their only stock in trade was impudence, nothing but unlimited impudence. They started by "cheeking" Gladstone, who was Prime Minister, over the Clergy Discipline Bill. They regarded "the old man" as "churchy," and they fought this blameless bill, which was brought in and passed in order to enable the Church to rid itself of drunken and dissolute parsons. After the Bill passed, Lloyd George—led by Ellis, rather absurdly named "the Parnell of Wales," who was inferior to his Carnarvon colleague in Parliamentary fence, though he had ideals—concentrated on Welsh Nonconformist questions. He did not come out as an all-round Parliamentarian until Chaplin, Minister for Agriculture, introduced the Agricultural Rates Bill. Then he took the leading part as obstructionist, and kept the House sitting through more than one night. He worked hard and anxiously, and was bent on making a Parliamentary name. He bore not the least ill-will to those who spoke or wrote against his part in the provocative and obstructive business. I wrote unfriendly articles against him, but never got a cold look from him. Some rising politicians are sensitive to hostile criticism: shrewder ones recognise and welcome it as part of their publicity campaign. Lloyd George often came and discussed the debates and speakers with me, and told me a good story or two. I owed to him one especially which has been told more than once, but not correctly. After a speech on the Agricultural Rates Bill, the Minister in charge, leaning towards the leader of the House, asked:

"Was that all right, Arthur?"

"Perfect, Harry, perfect," was the reply.

"You quite understood it, Arthur?"

"Not in the least, Harry."

Chamberlain, rather than Asquith, was the cynosure

of young Radical eyes at this period. Of the latter, I was told, "We think him rather too much of the Balliol type." I doubt whether Chamberlain had a closer observer and admirer in party politics than Lloyd George. There has been a touch of Chamberlain in many of Lloyd George's speeches on war and social conditions. Whether the unauthorized Chamberlain of the 'eighties would ever have taken the Lloyd George attitude, had the Boer War occurred then, is another matter.

I felt, some nineteen years ago, that Lloyd George was well in the running for the leadership of his party, and wrote an article to that effect for a series which the "Daily Mail" was printing. That particular one went, however, to the place which I daresay it deserved, the waste paper basket. Owing to his attitude over the Boer War, he was then an exceedingly unpopular and assailed figure. And, as a fact, he never has led his party.

I imagine Lloyd George to have modelled his career, consciously or not, in some degree on Chamberlain. He has not Chamberlain's hardness. His business capacity is not so sure as Chamberlain's. But his is a more winning personality, with a spiritual outlook which Chamberlain wholly lacked. For neither has intellectualism been claimed, or the literary instinct. In at least a few speeches during and before the war, Lloyd George has, however, approached pure oratory : whereas Chamberlain never did. My impression is that Lloyd George's colleague, the late President of the Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Court, was not less well equipped for political success. His early speeches in the House were quite as clear and as bold as Lloyd George's. He preferred, however, another career.

Lloyd George has succeeded in the face of fortune. He was without any of the advantages of family name, money, powerful friends, public school or University education. I should say, without the slightest prejudice, that he is easily the ablest of politicians to-day : taking intelligence and character together, that he is the best public performer. The power of family influence in

this country is still immense. It is not peculiar to the Conservative Party : there is plenty of Whig, Liberal and Radical family influence. Indeed it is a question whether we could devise a practical system of society and politics in which family influence never intervened. A good many members of the working classes, far from resenting family and social influence and its pressure, admire it. Servants in great families are, naturally, proud of it. Not long ago, the chatelaine of a powerful county family in the south of England was elated by the news that her son was to be colonel of his battalion. His rise was quick and unexpected. His delighted mother went round to tell the huntsmen. He, faithful retainer, was as elated as she by the news that the heir to the family estate and rent roll had already got his colonelcy. He paid her what was meant as a delicate compliment :

"Influence, my Lady," said he, *"influence, you see !"*

Lloyd George started and made his way without powerful family backing. I know of no better instance in politics—politics all through the 'eighties, 'nineties, and up till (and during) the war always means party politics—of a man who "made by force his merit known" than Lloyd George in Parliament from the early 'nineties till the formation of the Liberal Government, thirteen years ago. His munitions crusade in 1915 was a wonderful feat. I am quite aware of the help he got from Lord Northcliffe through the "Daily Mail" and the "Times." I knew, too, that he was the energizer rather than the organizer. Yet, no other man then could have rushed the Ministry of Munitions of War into sudden existence. There were good men and true engaged on munitions before Lloyd George took the field, notably my friend General Sir Stanley Von Donop, Master General of the Ordnance ; and I believe Lloyd George himself would affirm it. But their labour and other difficulties—of which I have made a somewhat close study—were insurmountable under the old system. The new Ministry was absolutely necessary, and the necessity was instant. Lloyd George

perceived and fronted a situation which many deeper and cleverer men would have turned aside from.

Intellectually, the most uncommon of the younger group was Lord Hugh Cecil, who came into the House several years after Lloyd George. He has been described as a genius. But that word is used carelessly. Personally, I never saw or imagined genius in any politician during these years in either House, except Parnell. Gladstone's range, his energy and eloquence were great. He was a splendid man in character and intellect. But I do not think he was a genius. Genius invents, talent only applies. There was plenty of talent among the politicians of the 'nineties and there is to-day. But there was nothing which could be rightly described as genius : and there is nothing to-day.

Clive, Cromwell, Napoleon, Frederick the Great, Bismarck, probably both the Pitts, Disraeli in a way—in his cleverness, at any rate, he was uncanny—these are one's idea of men of genius in public affairs, in the greater politics. There scintillated in them the mysterious spark of radium. The definition of genius as "a capacity for taking infinite pains" is a contemptible one, except in the use of the word "infinite," which does go well with genius. Misused of politicians to-day, the word genius is greatly desecrated in regard to poets and novelists. In English and American literature, Spencer, Burns, Shelley, Byron, Coleridge, Christopher Smart—whose poem, "A Song to David" is almost unknown to English readers except through an excerpt in Palgrave's "Golden Treasury"—Bunyan, Dickens, Edgar Allen Poe, Emerson, theirs is the hallmark of genius. Shakespeare, incomparably above all authors that have ever been, was compact of genius. He appears to have been lavish of his radium, casting it carelessly over indifferent plays such as "Pericles," converting them thereby into imperishable work. Bearing in mind what genius was in these men, how can we honestly apply the word to the scores of clever or talented novelists, poets and others to-day who are credited with this divine, inspired thing?

There seems to have been an unconscious conspiracy among all parties to credit Lord Hugh Cecil with genius in politics. People have even professed to believe that genius has kept him out of leadership, and made him a failure in politics ! Lord Hugh Cecil is a clever man, fastidious, surprising, and with a conscience and an aim. But that is not genius. I heard his maiden speech in the House, narrow and ecclesiastical, with taunts against Nonconformists, but bold and without a commonplace. He seemed to have the power to think whilst on his feet, like his father and Mr. Balfour. Sir John Gorst gave one a like impression. The thinking certainly was there, but perhaps it had been done before the speaker rose.

Would Lord Hugh Cecil have gained public notice and the ear of the Commons had he not been a Cecil ? The right answer to that question, often put among his party supporters and opponents, is, I feel, this : at the start, he would have secured no public notice. Even intellectual observers would mostly have overlooked him. To-day, he would be tolerably well known in political circles as an exceptional man, with principles and ideals. It would have ended at that. I am not partial to cheap badinage about "the Hotel Cecil" and so forth. If there is one hotel of the kind in party politics, depend upon it there are many, and they entertain both sides. But it is a reasonable and useful question to ask whether family name and influence help in our system of politics, and if so, to what extent. The remark above applies to the late George Wyndham, as well as to Winston Churchill and Viscount Grey. I am sure that they would not regard it as objectionable or as bad form to say this.

Yes, family name and backing help enormously, though they cannot help a dull soul to shine bright in the world. Winston Churchill and Viscount Grey probably would not have been as high in public life as they are but for their advantages at the start : but, on the other hand, it is very unlikely they would not have been where they are, had they been dull men.

And as to money—that helps enormously. Even a little of it at the start may be invaluable to a clever man with political ambitions. By a little money, I mean a little money—a few hundred or a thousand, say. Great blocks of money must greatly assist a man's career in public life from the start. I cannot determine which of the two—name and birth, or blocks of money—give a man the surer, quicker entry into the ruling circle in politics. The surest way of all is to have plenty of both from the start. Waiting for the money may gravely impede a man even after he has succeeded in politics and climbed near the top. It may even force him out of politics—force him to take some high legal or ornamental office in Greater Britain on account of the salary.

When people talk and write of “democracy,” “all the democracies,” and their triumphant complete advent, do they mean that—among other drastic social and political reforms—there will be an end to the dominance of (1) inherited money, and (2) inherited name and influence, in our political system? One would like a reply to this, but an authoritative reply is not forthcoming. Are or are not, under the reign of complete democracy, the lever of finance, and the lever of family *both* to be put on the scrap heap? I have had for some time a rooted suspicion that many leading public men who acclaim democracy with fervour, have reservations at the back of their minds in this. Some of them intend that the family lever, the old feudalism lever, shall be scrapped; but I am rather more suspicious as to whether they wish to see the financial lever put on the same heap.

If these suspicions are just, the new democracy will come in, after all, laden in some heavy chains. Plutocracy can be as puissant in public life as aristocracy. Plutocrat, like aristocrat, can mean autocrat; and when we strike down below the surface to realities, that is about what it does mean.

If you are going to forbid a man to inherit power in name, yet suffer him to inherit power in money, will you not be making a fool of democracy? Moreover,

it is questionable whether you can abolish family power and social influence in politics unless you prevent a man leaving blocks of money to the next generation, or equipping that generation during his own lifetime.

Early in the 'nineties, Mr. George Curzon, Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was starting on a brilliant career. Much of the feeling against him, on the ground that he is "a superior person," arbitrary, and inclined to haughtiness even among his peers, has been founded on hearsay and ignorance. I have never known him intimately, but for the best part of thirty years I have followed his career, read and heard many of his speeches, often corresponded and sometimes discussed public matters with him. I have not been able to discover "the superior person." I think it was Horsman whom Disraeli once put among the superior persons whose transcendent abilities all men agree to—and out of whose way everybody endeavours to escape. But, applied to Lord Curzon, the description is misleading and far-fetched. He always struck one as direct and assertive—asserting broad and generous views on India, and the politics of Empire when the wrangle over partisan questions occupied most of his colleagues and opponents. Lord Curzon has been compared with Canning. The comparison is rather attractive, only where has been the William Pitt in the former's career? Both were born in the purple of politics. Both will be remembered as on the whole in advance of their parties, impulsive, bold, idealists. Canning's was the rarer pen: some of his persiflage and taunt in "The Anti-Jacobin" of its kind has never been excelled, notably the stinging lines on a knife-grinder.

Sir Edward Grey was one of the most uncommon figures in politics during those years. I never heard him say a cheap thing in public or in private. Some of his speeches—though I scarcely think any of the few things he has written—were open to the reproach of a certain flatness. This was due, not to absence of fancy or imagination, but to an intense dislike of exag-

geration. Flat speeches usually include a sprinkling of *cliches*, stereotyped old saws and platitudes, but these horrors have been absent from his speeches.

Was Sir Edward Grey wrong in not taking the plunge when Austria struck at Serbia? Russia pressed him to do so; France was ready; and many people declare—with what conviction is another matter—that, if he had clearly told Germany that an attack on Austria would mean Great Britain coming in, the war would have been staved off. I have never believed that, and besides there was the consideration that Parliament might not have carried the country, had it made Serbia a case of war. Nor do I believe that Germany would then have held her hand. She meant war at the beginning of August, 1914, Great Britain in or not, and that she half expected our intervention was proved by the fact that at the beginning of August she held up British vessels at Hamburg. The violation of Luxemburg, just before the violation of Belgium, was a different matter. We were bound by solemn treaty in regard to Luxemburg. True, there was a fine distinction between our treaty engagements towards Belgium and Luxemburg respectively; to the plain man, however, it would have been a distinction without a difference.

On the whole, if Sir Edward Grey is to be blamed at all for the war, the critic must lay his charge long before July and August, 1914. There is not the faintest doubt that he sought peace all through that crisis, explored every conceivable route in that direction. Did he carry his explorations even too far? That is possible. But, in his position, Lord Salisbury, Lord Rosebery, Lord Lansdowne, or Lord Curzon, would have done the same. Lloyd George would have done the same. Peace had become—despite the Agadir crisis and the stiff attitude we struck then—an absolute obsession among the responsible party leaders. The Imperialist statesmen were scarcely less obsessed than their opponents. Yet, here is a puzzling fact—some of the cleverest German politicians did not believe in this passion for peace among English leaders. In Sir Edward Grey—and

even Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman of all men—they imagined sinister militarist designs. What makes this hallucination so singular is that many Germans suffering from it were very able politicians. The chief German speeches in the Reichstag during the war impressed one, of course, through their malignity. But they were impressive, also, through their intellectual quality. Germany, through the war, has shown, too, some clever and weighty journalists. Has any country during the past few years shown an abler publicist than Herr Harden? Some people here regard it as pro-junkerism to acknowledge intellect or power in the enemy. I noticed with surprise that the editor of a weekly paper condemned me as a pessimist because in an article in "The Nineteenth Century and After," in August, 1918, I owned to having always had a wholesome respect for the strength of the German Army since it overwhelmed France in 1870. What must he think of the pessimism of Coleridge, who, speaking of different schools of politics, said, "He (the devil) is a very clever fellow; I have no acquaintance with him, but I respect his evident talents."

Yet, with all their cleverness, the Germans amazingly mistook the peace intentions of Sir Edward Grey, and, earlier, of Campbell Bannerman. They could not have been well served by their agents here. They might have been excused for suspecting Chamberlain, even Lloyd George: but the least painstaking observation should have assured them that Sir Edward Grey not only ingeminated but passionately sought peace, and that Campbell Bannerman would pursue it at almost any price. The ignoramus here knew this as well as the wise man.

Years ago, D. A. Thomas, later Lord Rhondda, discussing with me various leading men in politics, contrasted Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey. He was a curious observer of the personal side in Parliament, and in those days chiefly confined himself to observation, though he had a short-lived ambition to emerge as an authority in the House on high finance, and

attempted a speech or two in that direction, criticising Goschen—not effectively. He said that certainly Sir Edward Grey struck him as a rising man, but he could find neither in him nor in anyone in Parliament a man so impressive for “pure intellectualism” as Asquith. I did not agree then, but afterwards came to recognise that D. A. Thomas was right. For the sense of intellectualism, and its momentum, Asquith was the most impressive figure in Parliament; not so subtle, not nearly so winning as Balfour, but weightier.

Few men who have enjoyed Sir Edward Grey's acquaintance can have failed to perceive in him one of the spirits that are touched to the finer issues. People have been heard to remark that he wasted time on such hobbies or trifles as birds. That is the sort of intelligence which regards time spent on reading Wordsworth's “Excursion” as wasted; or Richard Jefferies's “Amaryllis at the Fair,” one of the few novels of genius that we have known within the last thirty or forty years. It is, in fact, the sort of intelligence displayed by those who regard all time wasted that is not spent in getting money or in “getting on in the world.” There was a series of “things in books clothing,” produced ten or fifteen years ago, with some such programme for wordly success: I never saw one of them, but I believe they inculcated that doctrine. The “Spectator,” to its lasting honour, having discovered this series, slew it with an article. We have to kill the evil spirit of that kind of thing. It thrives in the universities of Hell. The Devil's pupils graduate in its schools.

Of the elder politicians through the 'nineties, Sir Michael Hicks Beach always interested me. He was without the glow of imagination, he was stiff in attitude, and without sign of what in public affairs is termed sympathy. His manner of speech, in budget and other debates, was old-fashioned. But his understanding was powerful. He was prized by the remnant of the old country gentleman party. That party has often been described as stupid—the party which is said to have been scandal-

ized by the flippancy of Canning, "the man who will next be sneering at the quorum." The least stupid of men, however, was Sir Michael Hicks Beach, with his hard, close-reasoned speeches. There was a general notion that he was ungracious and inaccessible, a hard man, and he was cartooned cleverly by F. C. Gould as "Black Michael." I doubt it. Probably the story—a true one—of his repelling a sanctimonious supporter as a "d——d old canting attorney" had a good deal to do with this legend. Really, Sir Michael Hicks Beach seems to have been a warm-hearted, shy man, loyal to his friends and party. He was a perfectly upright politician.

In April, 1915, I went to see Sir Michael, then Lord St. Aldwyn, and he made some frank remarks about the war. He criticised the terms of the new War Loan, and considered the money could have been obtained for a lower rate of interest: whilst, as to the military campaign, he told me he did not at all like the way it was being conducted. I asked him what he thought of the plan for forcing the Dardanelles.

"It will not be done, and it cannot be done," was his curt, dogmatic reply.

I mentioned this to a general who had made some sketches and observations of the Dardanelles defences—so far as they were known at an earlier date. He told me the assertion was nonsense. Still, it was distinctly not done. Was there, by the way, anything in the rumour—a French rumour—that the Allies' scheme to steam up the Dardanelles and take Constantinople was innocently communicated to King Constantine, who innocently passed it on to the Kaiser?

Sir Michael Hicks Beach's career is interesting, through the fact that the leadership of his party, and so the office of Prime Minister, seemed at least once within his right and reach, and yet he missed it. Parliamentary historians hereafter may regard him as one of the suppressed characters of politics—like Shelburne. It is said he retired in favour of Mr. Balfour, through his strong instinct of loyalty. That may be true. He had

a strong backing in Parliament and the country, and would have been a formidable competitor when Mr. Balfour became leader. But Mr. Balfour was a far more illustrious performer in the Parliamentary play. He was the lightest, adroitest fencer of all. No one on either side touched him in fineness and subtlety of argument, and it was all done with such grace. Most of the others lumbered like dray-horses where Mr. Balfour moved like a racer. His delicacy led many people to say that he was weak—and one of his intimates has been known to take this so literally as to regret that he could not be kept steadily up to 11 stone, in which case all would have been well with the party and country. But delicacy and strength are not contradictory qualities in a politician any more than in a man of letters. To turn a man away from the political arena because he has delicacy is about on a par with refusing a volunteer at the recruiting office because he is short. As a fact, weak was the wrong epithet to apply to Mr. Balfour, particularly through the days of the tariff reform jugglery in party politics. He was strong at the game, strong and wary.

It may be asked "What did all that adroit Parliamentary juggling by Mr. Balfour and the others, over words and arguments, really come to—of what solid service was it to the nation?" I cannot say that I have ever been able to discover it was any solid service to the nation. Possibly by spinning out Parliamentary proceedings, it was of use sometimes in preventing the House from passing too many crude measures; therefore, it may have had a negative use; though long, obstructive speeches, and challenging division after division, and so on, served that end still better. But the thing gave some pleasure. I know I enjoyed it then—though my appetite for it has clean gone—far more than I enjoyed the average play at a London theatre. With Chamberlain, Gladstone and Harcourt at their best, or with Lord Salisbury and Lord Rosebery in the other House, the full-dress debate was something of an intellectual treat. You could not

tell for certain when the brightest performances would take place. I think the brightest I heard sprang up unexpectedly, after midnight, when Professor Lecky, Mr. Balfour, and Mr. T. Healy corruscated.

But the most attractive individual feat I remember was one by Gladstone. The occasion was Chaplin's Small Holdings Bill. Chamberlain supported the Bill, and after dinner Gladstone suddenly turned up, fresh and keen. He hastily gathered from one of his supporters what had occurred, rose and made a slashing attack on Chamberlain, whom he represented as having boxed the compass over this question. It could not have been done better. I once or twice meant to look up that speech in Hansard for the sake of several of its metaphors, but reading Gladstone at his best was very disappointing after hearing and seeing him at that best.

The feat pleased everybody present, several hundreds—Chamberlain visibly rejoiced. There is the answer to the question: "Of what use is this Parliamentary play?"

To return to what I was saying about influence: to be reasonably sure of getting high office, under our party system and tradition, family and money are necessary. But, given brain with resolution and industry, probably the best men at Westminster ultimately do emerge, and succeed up to a point. Napoleon declared impatiently that talent could not be kept under among men or even women: that it must always assert itself. Certainly I met good fellows at both Houses during the ten years or so I spent with them, who never emerged. Some had latent ability, but they were not compelled to make their way, and they disliked push and publicity. Among a crowd of them, I recall with pleasure an M.P. for Middlesex in those days, for a sterling thing he once said to me. We were speaking of an M.P., one of the cleverest speakers in the House. My friend said: "I think he must be a cad. Returning home late from the House the other night, he cursed the hall porter in a most bullying way. The poor beggar would, of course, have lost his place if he had dared to answer." He was

right. There is no surer sign of an ill-conditioned bully than blustering at hired servants *in the presence of others* : it is the italicised words that make the offence so disgusting. One has heard waiters cursed and threatened for not bringing food and drink in time, or attending first to somebody else ; or gamekeepers in presence of the shooting guests. That is unpardonable. It may indicate bad blood or breeding in the offender. But no matter what the social status of the offender, be he parvenu or Plantagenet, no matter whether the servant through inattention failed or did not fail, this is clear—the offender has acted as a bounder. I have heard it argued that waiters and others of their class do not feel “as you or I should feel in such a matter.” That is a feeble excuse. Moreover, it takes no account of the disagreeable position into which the host or entertainer who curses his hired servant puts his guests or those who chance, unhappily, to be in his company. The offence is a masculine one, essentially. Women may now and then nag at a servant before their guests or friends, but their *faux pas* is trifling compared with the male bully’s. All men who are given, even on the rarest occasions, to curse hired servants at table or elsewhere before guests and friends, should turn to those pages of “Pendennis,” in which “the Campaigner” (she was not a woman, she was a virago) bullies the wretched servant. Thackeray was a gentleman. He knew.

During these years at Westminster, and afterwards, I was continuously working in journalism, in the earlier period almost entirely in journalism concerned with party politics. Early in the ’nineties, journalists were used for party purposes a good deal by politicians, great and inconsiderable, but, on the Conservative side commonly, they were rather feared or suspected. There was a *liaison* between the two, but the public was not supposed to know of it. Especially this was so in regard to politicians in office. In opposition, the *liaison* between the front bench and the Press may often have been obvious enough at the House or in clubs ; but, on the

member of the front opposition bench becoming a member of the front ministerial bench, he grew shy of the association. This was not invariable but usual. I do not think it should be attributed to pride; rather, it was etiquette or custom. Besides, a man in office had less leisure to cultivate the Press than a man out of office. But whatever the explanation, this is certain—political leadership was distinctly shy of acknowledging relations between itself and those who wrote for newspapers: though it was less shy in regard to those who owned newspapers. The English custom was the opposite to the French. In France, political leaders own, inspire and write signed articles for, daily newspapers. Political leaders here have rarely been journalists. The case of Lord Salisbury is sometimes cited to the contrary. It is recalled that, as Lord Robert Cecil, he wrote many articles in the "Standard" and the "Saturday Review"—even wrote "for a living." But, of course, he never wrote for a living, was never engaged in professional journalism. Whilst waiting to take his place at the front in public life, he played a little at journalism—there was not more in it than that; Canning amused himself with journalism; Sir William Harcourt amused himself with it; George Wyndham, H. C. Cust did so with *eclat*; and there have been various other aristocratic instances. But they had nothing really to do with newspapers, professionally, and for a living.

The members of the old ruling class kept themselves aloof from the regular business rigidly, like George Meredith's creation, Percy Dacier—though, like Diana, in the same novel, they have sometimes found their way, article or information in hand, into a newspaper office.

The unwritten English rule that statesman above all should not own newspapers or have a financial concern in them was faithfully observed by Chamberlain, among others. I once went to see him about a plan for starting a new paper. I had never met him, and for the first few minutes of the interview felt chilled. He struck

me as more than unsympathetic, as forbidding, though he showed me consideration in asking the secretary to give us the room to ourselves. I had to explain anew the proposal, which had already been put before him, roughly, in writing. Chamberlain smoked a cigar, listened, said nothing. I began to wonder whether he would ever break the silence. Cordially, I wished I was anywhere but in that inhuman reference-book library at Princes Gardens—there was not, I believe, a true book in it. However, ultimately he did speak, and the interview grew tolerable. He was not ready with the political backing we wanted; and he added that he had made it a cast-iron rule not to take any financial interest in newspapers, local or other—though we had not asked him to support the scheme with money. Before I left, he became almost kindly human. He opened out. He touched on politics, asked me what I thought of the ecclesiastical line of the Diggle group of Unionists—it was in 1894—and, without waiting for an answer, told me he considered these Unionists very foolish men, heading for disaster. As I was leaving, he pointed to a newspaper lying on the table. He had been reading it when I came in.

“I consider that the best of our newspapers,” said Chamberlain.

It was the “Westminster Gazette.” I noticed it contained one of F.C.G.’s cartoons at Chamberlain’s expense.

A few days after this, I saw a Conservative statesman on the same errand. He set my colleague and me at our ease at once; told us he knew nothing of newspapers, listened with lenient smile to our prospectus, and referred us to “My Agent, Captain Middleton, to whom I leave all these matters.” In other words, he refused his help. But are there not a few choice spirits on earth who confer a more delicate favour in their refusals than plain men confer in their acceptance? Even to have been refused by Mr. Balfour—is there not a measure of distinction in that?

Before we left, he told us a story to complete the

pleasure. Once only had he tried to forward the views of a supporter, who asked him to give his name to a newspaper scheme.

"I gave my name, and some of my friends came in. They lost their money, and then the promoter abused me violently."

Our projected journal never saw print. I came to the conclusion that, to start a new journal, a man must find all the money himself, or he must be a very adroit hand in manipulating figures. He must know all about such things as deferred shares and debentures, and be able to draw up in advance a stimulating balance sheet for his first year of publication; if, in addition, he knows one or two professional company promoters, and has it in his heart to sandwich himself between them, so much the better. We believed in our scheme, but we did not believe in a bumper year to start with—and said so. One politician—I think one only—was rather attracted by this defect. He liked the scheme, and he told us that if any proposal of the kind could tempt him, it would be ours. "But you are late in the field," he said: and he unfolded to us how many thousands of his money had been gobbled up—I forget the sum, but think it ran into five figures—by a perfervid, patriotic organ then on its deathbed.

A great deal of money has been invested by politicians during the last thirty years or so in new journals for party and patriotic purposes. It has been, as a rule, lost; or, to describe the operation more exactly, it has changed hands, passed mainly to paper manufacturers and printers. But it is a point whether the politician who found the money has a cause for complaint, unless the promoter pledged himself to financial success. Having never been the means of losing a capitalist his money, I can view the thing in a detached way. A patriotic journal is not a new bottle company or an alleged silver mine in Eldorado. Of course, there is a far-away chance it may, goodness knows how, make a pot of money, as a new yacht may win the cup, or a racehorse the Derby; but, as with the yacht and the

racehorse, the patriotic journal is not financed by party men primarily for pecuniary motives. Sometimes they finance it for the advancement of themselves, sometimes for the advancement of their country.

No one understood these matters better than Captain Middleton. He also knew that power is mainly reached by circulation. Speaking to him about our project, I outlined the political programme we had in view. Without a suspicion of cynicism, he advised :

“Get your circulation first, then help us with policy.”

Apart from there being many more journalists engaging in public life than there were twenty-five years ago, the power of the Press has greatly grown of late. I imagine its power here to be not less than in the United States or France. Throughout the world the power of the Press is growing. Probably Germany is not such a marked exception as we imagine—in fact, her rulers have perceived the growing power of newspapers, and have been careful to secure their support. All newspapers which deal with politics seek to increase their power. They must—for they seek to increase their circulation, to gain more and more public attention. I am not impressed by the talk as to a novel Press peril—a section of newspapers doing what they never, never used to do, intervene in politics! The idea is that, formerly, newspapers held apart from Westminster, and strictly reserved themselves for criticism as detached outsiders: whereas some of them now, shocking to relate, wish for a part in the performance for themselves. Certainly newspapers are playing a bigger, more direct part than they were five and twenty or ten years ago, but that is because they are more observed, read and circulated. Take, for example, a journal which assuredly would deny being a conspirator against the House of Commons, the “Westminster Gazette.” It has become so observed by the ability of its articles, and by its editorial tone, that it could not help intervening at St. Stephen’s, if it would. The “Westminster Gazette” has the influence which attaches to a seat on the front benches, an office in

Whitehall. How many private members, or even "lesser pillars of the Constitution," have, in shaping legislation, a voice as powerful as the "Westminster Gazette's"? Its articles are read six days in the week, not alone by supporters but by many opponents. What mere M.P. what lesser member of the Government, has a power in politics like that? The "Westminster" has not the extensive range of some of its contemporaries. On the other hand, it is a power among the *cognoscenti*.

The strength of the Press, its direct influence in politics of peace and war, has increased all round. It is still increasing; and what reason is there to believe that, with universal suffrage realized, it will diminish? To say that this or that powerful organ stands by the old tradition, and does not interfere in Government, seems to me to be playing with words. They all interfere—the amount of each organ's interference depending partly on the size of its public, partly on the reputation its articles gain among the *cognoscenti*. Circulation may count first, but reputation is a power in the land.

A curious fact about the Press is that, though its public and therefore its power steadily grow, the saying "You can't believe a word you read in the papers," has become common form. Except in remote country districts—where, as in our childhood, this or that "must be true, for I see'd it in print"—war news especially was mistrusted. The casualty lists after enemy air raids were consistently mistrusted after the first Zeppelin raid in 1915. Many more people were killed and cities destroyed than "the papers say." Far more enemy submarines have been sunk and captured than "the papers say." It was vain to remind the pessimists in the first case, and the optimists in the second, that the figures were official, not mere newspaper, for most readers of war intelligence are confused as to what is official and what unofficial; and not a few who can discriminate between the two discount both equally. That the war did not end by Christmas, 1914, or in 1915, that Austria was not starved out in 1915, that Germany was still fighting in 1918, though she was reported to be calling

up the brass door handles and copper kettles in 1916—these facts made great numbers of people shy to believe the newspapers. They did not observe, or had forgotten, that those stories were printed in serious journals only as rumours flying about Holland, Switzerland, or some other neutral country. In fact, anything that appears in print—"somewhere, I can't remember where I saw it"—is "what the papers say." And, when it turns out rubbish, the plain man feels justified of his assertion that you can't believe a word you see in print.

Personally, I have the faith of a child in definite, official statements about such events as air-raid casualties and sunken submarines: all experience proves they are as accurate as authority can make them at the time of publication. Official war communiques, military and naval alike, can be accepted too. But here reservations are necessary. We have to read between the lines—and we do not always read right. One of the anxieties of those who sent out war communiques—British, French, Italian, American, German, Austrian, Bulgarian, Turkish—was not to inform or hearten the other side and not to depress people at home. The Turkish communique writer reduced this rule of war to broad comedy sometimes, and there were others—on both sides—who often shaded away reverses. But it is the business of every reader to make his own additions and deductions. He should be able to—after such years of practice. In any case, neither newspaper nor admirals and generals ought to be blamed because war has certain rules founded on horse-sense. Even the League of Nations, if it went to war, would have to be careful not to hearten the enemy; and might even have to shade many reverses should such occur to it.

A great deal of railing against the Press to-day is honest, but often stupid. The man who vows all journalists are liars has the same kind of understanding as the man who vows every attorney is a swindler, or every parson a hypocrite, every tradesman a profiteer. It is a lazy sort of judgment, not much in it. However, from time to time a political leader makes a perfunctory

speech praising the Press for its public spirit, independence, etc., so journalism has not much to complain about on this score.

It might be objected that with only a slight acquaintance with the inside working, the staff arrangements, of newspaper offices, I do not speak with authority on journalistic methods to-day. Certainly my work has consisted almost entirely of outside contributions—at various times to the old “Standard,” “Daily Mail,” “Times,” “Westminster Gazette,” “Morning Post,” “Pall Mall Gazette,” “Evening News,” and other papers, London and country. I have been a chartered libertine of journalism. But in twenty-seven years’ hard work, I have come in touch with many editors, sub-editors, reporters, leader writers and special correspondents : and I am sure that in mind and character the journalistic average is equal to that of any of the organized professions. Journalists are better instructed, as a rule, in a multiplicity of subjects, they know more about life at large, than members of other vocations ; but their knowledge of one special subject, or branch of life, is not so thorough as the lawyer’s, the doctor’s, the scientist’s, or the engineer’s. The journalist is not often a specialist. He generalizes.

I do not say the journalist generalises quite so much as the Cabinet Minister, however. A Cabinet Minister is now an authority on the Army. Next he goes to the Treasury, perhaps. Later, instructs the country from the Admiralty, the Colonial Office, and before he has reached these higher realms, he may have filled up his leisure time at the Education Office or the Board of Agriculture, having refused Ireland—like a wise man—and possibly a few minor Governorships. I have known ex-Cabinet Ministers say they cannot write articles. Two, at least, have said so to me. That is strange, for the Cabinet Minister, under our system, is obviously nothing if not a publicist. He is really the all-round journalist if ever there was one. It is immaterial in this matter that he speaks his articles ; first learns by heart his best articles on agriculture,

education, Ireland, foreign affairs, the Colonies, war, labour, flight, reconstruction, etc.; then speaks them: whereas the newspaper journalist, at most, only speaks his articles to one unfortunate person, by whom they are type-written. The Cabinet Minister and the newspaper publicist are of the same kidney exactly. But the former is much cleverer, much more valuable: he must be—he is paid £5,000 a year.

The £5,000 a year man must be abler—must he not? And yet, after knowing Government men and newspapermen for a good many years now, I have this obstinate notion: that out of the offices of three London newspapers alone, if the worst came to the worst, we could form a Government that would carry on at St. Stephen's and in Whitehall, and you might barely recognise the difference in your personal comforts or in the power of the country. I would take, let us say, the "Daily News," the "Morning Post," the "Daily Mail," three organs that appear to be worlds apart in policy, and make from them a Coalition Government. Really and truly they would run the thing; and their unanimity would be marked. I do not say which of the editors I would make Prime Minister. I am not sure I would not choose a young reporter, or a seasoned sub-editor for that particular post. I have known reporters who are as clever as Cabinet Ministers—much more cultivated than some Cabinet Ministers. Of all stagnant snobbery, defend me from that kind which affects to regard, or regards, a reporter as a grubby, penny-a-liner sort of person, and a Cabinet Minister as God's own anointed.

Oscar Wilde told me he thought his brother the cleverest living journalist, next Labouchere. Willie Wilde was exceedingly adroit with his pen. He would turn up late at a sitting of the Parnell Commission, stay a few minutes, then go away and write the liveliest account of it which appeared in any morning paper next day. But he was cursory. Sitting next to me at the Westminster Play—the School play—he, with good nature, explained some of the allusions. Oxford came into the

play, so Wilde told me about 'Varsity life in the 'eighties. I soon saw that he had put in even less time at Oxford than at the Parnell Commission. I let him run on. One would much rather listen for a while to nonsense about Oxford from a brilliant man who has not been there, than to platitude from a dullard who has. The first is more likely to set us on thinking. Though Wilde and Labouchere had such clever pens, there are scores of writers on the Press to-day who can imagine as well as the first, such as Chesterton and Belloc, and a few who know quite as much about life as the second.

I am not sure whether it is true the French are far better journalists than English and Irish; though the French have *esprit* in writing, and they have more stylishness. But that applies still more to French literature. The average French war book is probably high above the English one both in form and fancy. As to modern French fiction, what have we to match it to-day? Lately I chanced to pick up a little story named "Dosia." I had never heard of it before, and probably even regular tasters of French fiction do not talk much about it. Before I had finished "Dosia," it had moved me to laughter, and moved me to tears: I had to turn back and read again some of its exquisite pages once, twice—a lovely thing of its *genre*—like Miss Hawker's "Mademoiselle Ixe." Yet I daresay its author, Henry Greville, is not high above the French literary average. In the fine touch, and in the realm of imagination, modern French print leaves us far behind.

Some people, by the by, regard imagination as akin with falsehood. They think journalists and legislators ought not to possess it. But what is false is, of course, not the imagination, it is "the uninformed imagination." That expression is Mr. Balfour's, thrown off casually and wasted in some debate long buried in Hansard. One would as soon have a man without soul as without imagination.

Looking back over my writing years, I find I have had

a varied, restless, interesting, anxious time in journalism. One of the first things to say of writing is that it is a terribly insecure business. The man who lives on writing for newspapers or in writing books—I combined the two almost from the start—lives on his wits. He cannot retire on his pension like civil servant, soldier or sailor respectably—there is no pension to retire on. He cannot sell his business like a doctor or a lawyer—there is no business to sell. The journalist and writer of books must dree his own weird with a vengeance, unless he started securely on a round sum left him by his father or aunt, in which case all he need do is play at writing. It is hard to make enough money out of journalism to retire at the age a civil servant or a city clerk retires, unless over and above journalistic work the writer has caught the fancy of the public with “one of the best sellers on the market,” i.e., a popular book, which runs swiftly through many editions. Such sellers need not be bad, they need not be good : but they should be vigorous and luscious, they must catch the public fancy of the moment. They are helped by “a good Press,” by column reviews on the day of publication, and so much the better if they are produced by a capitalist who engages for their advertisement the public hoardings and the sandwich-man—whom the war, by the way, seems almost to have extinguished as it did for a while the sandwich. But even this will not create a rattling good seller.

The first need of all is that the book shall get talked of at dinners, lunches and teas ; at hydros and boarding houses, at country house week-end parties ; and shall continue to be talked about till the next seller comes along. That is, for a good seller, the without-which-nothing. But nobody knows how or why a new book comes to be the vogue, to be talked about. It appears to be a fluke ; and you cannot, with any hope of success, play for flukes in authorship as you can when under the cushion at billiards. The best sellers on the market may rarely or never be literature, there may rarely or never be magic in them—in fact, there isn’t—but they are

always clever, slick journalism, and are taken for magic by a very large number of readers, earnestly striving for the light. Prigs alone question the ability of the producer of the best sellers on the market. Without this ability, the fluke would never come off.

Formerly, I believe a good deal of money was also made in the writing of a special sort of story, equally ephemeral, termed "a blood." I don't know that I have ever tasted a blood, but I used to hear about the thing from those who understood it. The war has probably spoilt the market.*

For several years I was reader and literary adviser to Ruskin House in the time of Mr. George Allen, John Ruskin's old friend and publisher, a sterling and beautiful character. I must have sampled during that period hundreds of MSS. Ruskin House published Maeterlinck's books, including "The Life of the Bee," a radiant wonderful book, though not equal, except in the purity of its style, to blind Huber's work on the bee. Also it published Professor Gilbert Murray's translations from the Greek dramatists. But most of the MSS. which I had to taste were not appetising. Now and then I had a treat, as when reading the MSS. of Lord Acton's Letters on politics, history and literature: or the English translation of "The Heart of the Northern Sea," by Alvide Pridz, a Norwegian novel of genius, which I warmly recommended to Ruskin House—but out of which, I am afraid, a fortune was not made! As a rule the fiction offered was bad. It was misimagined. Nor was it smart enough to fluke a good sale. It was amorphous. Some of the MSS. which I had to reject—a hateful duty—were published by other houses. The bulk, I think, must have travelled finally into the waste paper bag. The great unpublished

* Since writing this I find that a sort of "blood" is still produced. Wandering about the terrible dingy streets where the shipbuilders and workers of Clydeside live and shop, I noticed the literature in some of the windows in the slums. There were numbers of Red Indian scalping books, together with domestic horrors of quite the old-fashioned sort. The Minister for Education should make a tour through these fields and find out for himself what the masses read. Imagine domestic "bloods" and Red Indian scalps after four years of world war.

—what a secret, humiliating tragedy lies there ! Being of “ the writing sort ” myself, how I longed at sensitive moments to advise the publication of some indifferent MS., especially if it were clear the writer was in distress.

Journalism by itself, or journalism mixed with literature, means an interesting life. The wish to write, the ambition to become concerned, above all, in *books*, laid hold of me in childhood. Long before I matriculated at Oxford, before I knew I was going there, I had contributed signed articles to—a science paper !* It is interesting, sometimes it is absorbing: but it is grinding, precarious work, and it is one of the paths that may lead educated men to the pauper’s grave or to the madhouse. People often tell me they wish to write, and they ask my advice as to how they should start. Soldiers at the front have consulted me in the matter : they, on their return from the war, would become journalists, authors, editors. I can only advise them to make a safer career. A League of Nations may help to keep the peace, but not among individuals so long as the world of print remains as it is to-day a world of furious competition, largely internecine competition.

Personally, I don’t know that I have much to complain about. I chose, or drifted into, writing as a business, and I did so of my own will. I have written what I wanted to write ; and on the whole in unsigned—and always in signed—articles I have had freedom of expression. Where I have written to order, I have taken good care that order has not been contrary to my own political bent at the time. I have met many good fellows in journalism among opponents as well as among associates in politics.

The financial side : I have written a dozen books, edited others, and I have never been treated dishonestly by a publisher. My impression is that publishers and journalists who understand their business are straight enough in their dealings with writers. But I do strongly feel that journalism ought to be organized : it ought

* Hardwicke’s “ Science Gossip.”

to be made a regular profession. Doctors are organized, barristers and lawyers are organized: and their standing and public reputation are thereby enhanced. It is ridiculous that journalism, such an immense power throughout the country now, should not be organized scientifically as are other leading professions. The Press should be put on as good a status as the Bar. We are to have reconstruction all round, society, politics, economics. That will be a good opportunity for journalists to organize themselves, and to make the reputation of their calling somewhat equal to its power. They should get powerful men, like J. L. Garvin, Strachey and Spender, who have "a conscience and an aim," to make of journalism an accredited profession.

CHAPTER VI

POLITICS AND JOURNALISM—(Continued)

IN September, 1913, I abandoned freelance work for a time, and devoted myself to the "Saturday Review," which I edited till the end of June, 1917, when I resigned. I had been writing for the "Review" constantly since about 1899. As a result of that, I suppose, even to-day, people will occasionally write asking me am I still interested in it, and will I please see that this or that article is read or "put in"? To most men, the Press is a complete mystery; they cannot make out how papers are produced, "how things get into the papers." The House of Commons knows better in these days, being well staffed with what Americans call "news-paper men"—editors, leading article and sketch writers in the House itself, as well as in Gallery and Lobby. It is considerably employed in "getting things into the papers." Yet, even in the House there are probably members who still do not understand the Lobby, Gallery and their usages. Once when I was in the Lobby, a north country Member, a sailor, came up and began to chat to me. He ended by asking what I did there, and was astonished when I told him. He had no idea papers had Lobby tickets, or what use could be made of them. Yet he had sat for years in the House, and was a familiar figure in the Lobby. Howard Vincent, hearing of this, broke into an expression of contempt: "Why did you trouble to inform him, Dewar?" he asked. "Why help a man like that, who doesn't trouble to learn his elementary business when he comes to the House?"



One occasionally met officers at the Front who were quite in the dark as to how news and comments pass into print ; one persistent story being that those who describe battles have been up in the "Sausages." I was introduced to a G.S.O. at Corps Headquarters, able and highly informed, on the morning after a great and successful attack by the Divisions of his own Army Corps, an attack which was still going forward. On learning who I was, and why there, "Well, I'm very sorry to hear it," he exclaimed. He was alarmed lest the good news should be published and the enemy thus be informed. However, the Corps General knew about the Press, its despatch riders, censors in the field and so forth, and set his G.S.O.I. at ease. They made me sit down to breakfast. What good fellows they were ! They told me all—far more than I could use, of course. Then we passed to the theme of sport at home with rod and hound, and forgot for half an hour the battle raging fiercely over the ridge—that ridge that cut the world in two. It is tempting to turn aside from politics and papers, and recall experiences with the British Army in the field. They were so much fresher, and more inspiring than anything at the base. The next best thing to the Front during an action was the scene in a munition factory or shipbuilding yard, when the lathes were all going and the great hammers clanging. But even the forge of Vulcan never glowed so bright as the field of Mars.

I started editing the "Saturday," at a weary time in politics. The wrangle over Irish Home Rule was going on, and the hollow heroics on both sides as to Ulster rent the air. The whole of that "old dead body of spite" in 1913 and 1914, known as party politics had grown distasteful to me. I was tiring, too, of the declamations against Lloyd George's Whitechapel and Limehouse speeches. The truth was dawning on one that there was matter as well as metaphor in those speeches, if taste was somewhat to seek in its presentation. After all, what in substance were the attacks on "the idle rich," but Chamberlain of the 'eighties over again—and did not

Chamberlain draw his famous metaphor from Solomon? Anyhow, I interested myself much more in the literary side, and in the question whether in the journalistic world it is possible, with success, to put new wine into old bottles. The "Times" was making that experiment then; but the "Times" is the "Times." A great deal has been said about the deterioration in the "Times" of late years. But take down from their dusty shelves some old volumes of the "Times," and spend an hour glancing through them. Candour will wring from you, however unwilling a witness, the admission that the paper was never a more living organ than it is to-day. I think the "Times" was never better set out, and never half so interesting and human as in recent years. There is much uniformed, lazy criticism in favour of the old journalism as against the new. Oddly, we find popular prejudice running in the other direction in regard to literature. Take fiction, especially. Scott is supposed to be dull—"Old Mortality" dull! George Eliot to be heavy—"Dr. Gilfil's Love Story" and "The Mill on the Floss" heavy! Jane Austen dealt with an uninteresting, banal set, Dickens with such vulgar people! That illiterate criticism overlooks the truth that genius will pierce beneath a society, however middle-class and banal outwardly, deep down to the human nature, the psychology of the thing. Scott, George Eliot, Jane Austen and Dickens are alive, intensely *interesting*. They will be so in the twenty-first century. But the newspaper press of their epochs, its fonts, its blinding columns, its stilted or pompous journalese—not even a Mr. Hardcastle could make out a case for that old sawdust.

Party politics remained trivial and weary in 1913, and for seven months of 1914. We were mainly engrossed with portentous trifles; and who can wonder at it, remembering that we had only lately emerged from the terror lest the country would be ruined if a few broken old men and women, after lives of hard, faithful labour, were granted by the State the sum of five shillings a week? It was good to turn from that political paradise of mean things to the crusade of Lord Roberts,

in view of the preparation of Germany, and her threats of military aggression. Lord Roberts wrote to me directly I set to work on the "Saturday," and promised to let me have a contribution on the Army in time for the first issue of 1914. I had practically made up the issue soon after Christmas, 1913, and I imagined that he had forgotten all about the matter. But it was not Lord Roberts' habit to forget the least of his friends; I ought to have known that, for in the same spirit and with punctuality he had done me a like favour years before. The article on the Army came, with a letter from himself. So it was printed in the first issue of 1914, and Thomas Hardy sent me a wonderful "message," and that was printed too. I recast the issue; it had promised to be humdrum, but almost at the last my two friends came in and made it a Roberts and Hardy issue, the best I could ever hope to turn out.

I had been brought up to dislike the German standpoint and mentality. That dislike dated for me since 1870-71, when, as a small child, I could recall Germany stamping on France, robbing and humbling her to the dust. In August, 1914, I hated Germany passionately, when she put a bloody iron hoof on little Luxemburg. Belgium made the world forget Luxemburg, but I feel now that we ought to have declared war on Germany when in August 1914, she violated the helpless little country, despite the pledge in 1867. Serbia, at least, was armed, Belgium was armed, Luxemburg was an unprotected woman.

When war came, or was certain to come, I set to work to reorganize the "Saturday" in all directions. It had to be cut down in size. Changes in the staff were unpleasant but necessary. We had to strip for action—and we did strip. It was clearly going to be a long war. The gigantic preparations of Germany for upwards of two generations, the known skill of her organizers, her wealth, immense population, and the resolution of the German people, put this past all question. I got Major-General Sir William Knox, one of the defenders of Ladysmith, and a hard campaigner since the 'seventies,

to write a weekly military appreciation. Knox had already done a little reviewing for me, thanks to Lord Roberts' suggestion, and he threw himself with ardour into the work. It was the start of a two years' comradeship between us, only clouded and closed by his death towards the end of 1916. He struggled to write on to the very end against pain and weakness. His last article was written on his deathbed. In August, 1914, I had turned to Knox largely because he was a firm believer in obligatory military service. It was bound to come when the natural and real voluntary recruiting spirit died down. I did not think that the compulsory principle ought to be applied on the declaration of war; I am still of that opinion, though a Secretary of State for War told me I erred therein, and that August 4th, 1914, was the only date in the earlier part of the war when it could have been successfully applied. I thought we ought to give the voluntary spirit a chance, and resort to compulsion on that spirit dying down. There followed at the declaration of war, and the call for men, a glorious response. The scene at the London recruiting offices in August, 1914, was intensely stirring. Pure voluntaryism is a far better thing than compulsion. It is glowing, inspiring. I am glad that the "Saturday" under me did not call for a military service measure then. Equally I am glad the "Saturday" started on a campaign in October, 1914, out and out in favour of obligation or compulsion, and never looked back till the second of the military service measures to that end was made law in 1916.

But there were a few moments, some three-and-a-half years afterwards, when I could have wished I had never touched conscription. Getting into the train at Holyhead on April, 1918, with a friend who had just crossed with me from Kingstown, I reminded him he had not yet shown me a document relating to his views on the Irish Convention. Then, being on the subject, I said to him: "Why on earth did those (I think I said) blighters queer the conscription pitch by their foolish Sub-Committee Report?" The Report in question had been agreed to by two Unionists as well as by the Nationalists,

and the idea prevailing was that it condemned all conscription except through the action of an Irish Parliament. My friend gave me one look. He said nothing. He turned immediately afterwards to our fellow-passenger in the carriage, who was arranging luggage, and said: "Let me introduce you to the Duke of Abercorn—this is Mr. Dewar."

The Duke was one of the members of the Sub-Committee.

I hated conscription at that moment—everything to do with it. Our boat, half-an-hour before we landed at Holyhead, had been fired at by a German submarine, which suddenly popped up in the calm sea. The torpedo missed us by seventy yards or so.* At that second in the train I could have wished the Germans had made a better shot.

My friend, having introduced us, left the carriage for a few minutes. The Duke thereupon explained what had really happened—there had been no condemnation of conscription, though critics were making capital out of the Sub-Report. He was very good-natured; *noblesse oblige*; and—after a while—the awkwardness passed. But it was a warning to be restrained over Irish politics when you are not sure what company you are in.

Of course, after the August recruiting fervour there were plenty of instances of men sacrificing everything and going of their own accord. Nobody denies that. The point is that the recruiting method which was practised after the close of the August spurt and the reaction which followed, was an undignified and often an insulting thing. One fell in with extraordinary instances of altruism in those days and later. I sat in the smoking-room of the Station Hotel in Perth on a winter evening early in 1915, after, as I thought, everybody had gone to bed. But after a while a man came and joined me from the far end of the room. He said he was waiting for the early morning train to Inverness, and putting his

* This incident happened in broad daylight, and close to Holyhead. I wrote a description of it, which the Press Censor suppressed. But, later, the Germans torpedoed either this or a sister vessel, and some hundreds of lives were lost. I regret that my article was suppressed. It might have done some good.

hand into his pocket, drew forth some greasy papers. He handed them to me. He was a fat man, well on in middle age, who looked as if he had lived a drowsy life. He was what is termed, I think, an engrosser. I imagined he wanted money. Not at all ; feeling strange and lonely, he wanted a few human words with someone. This man had just taken the shilling, and was leaving Edinburgh for the Depot of a Highland regiment. His papers proved his words. His enlisting age, I noticed, was 38. I asked him his other age. He was in his fiftieth year. This prosaic, dingy, engrossing clerk of fifty could not hold out any longer against the country's appeal for men, so one day, braving the derision of friends—no light thing—he went and did it. I have often thought of that man, forlorn, a little ridiculous if one contrasted him with the smart military group which had just disappeared from the room and with the excitement and splendour of war. Here was something like a case of making good after a drab life, spent in the least heroic environment ! There must have been other cases of that kind in 1915 ; many such a one, no doubt, lies obscure for ever on the great field of the Somme.

Week after week, Knox, writing as " Vieille Moustache," pounded away with his heavies, and I wrote, and got others to write leading articles, " Notes of the Week " letters innumerable on the subject. We pressed for a measure bringing in—with a few educational and scientific exceptions—all men between the ages of 20 and 35 for service abroad, and between 35 and 45 for service at home. To put the age limit at 50 struck me then—it still strikes me—as ridiculous. But tribunals and emptied occupations—among which to-day appears the House of Commons itself*—were so busily employed for two years in postponing this young " indispensable," and in completely withdrawing that young " indispensable " from the ranks of the Army, that ultimately we rushed in a scare to the other extreme, and raised the

* What a fine irony there was in the House of Commons passing, without consulting the country, a Bill calling up all men to 50, and exceptionally 55, years of age, and then, being itself placed outside the operation of that measure.

age to 50, and exceptionally—think of it!—to 55. In 1915, before the first military service measure came into effect, there was a rush and scrimmage among tens of thousands of young men to get away into the exempted occupations. Who aided and abetted them in this rush? I asked a statesman, who should have known, if anyone in England knew, how it was managed. Well, he certainly knew quite as much as Lord Kitchener knew, but he confessed to me indignantly he could not discover how all these men were being spirited away from the Army. He gave me a startling figure. He said that something like forty per cent. of the unmarried, serviceable young men were being withdrawn from the Army by this exempted occupation device. We can see in the light of such a revelation as that why it was ultimately thought necessary, during a scare in 1918, to raise the age.

The question was asked wonderingly from October, 1914, to the autumn of 1915: "Why does not Lord Kitchener insist on compulsion if he believes in it, and if it is necessary for winning the war?" The answer seems to be that Lord Kitchener was never interested in the principle as was Roberts. He did put it into effect, in drawing up the Australian scheme; but then Australia requested him to frame a scheme including national obligatory service for home defence.

Lord Kitchener merely did what he was asked to do in that case; the principle was supplied him. There were other reasons. For one thing, the members of the Government were openly opposed to it, honestly did not believe in it. Mr. Lloyd George would be the first to concede that for eight or nine months of the war he spoke against it strongly. They all took that line. There was yet another motive; he became absorbed in his own scheme, which was voluntarism, with compulsion if it failed—the threat: "I have the number of your doors." But when he called in 1915 for 300,000 more men, and they did not turn up, he was annoyed and disappointed; and then I believe he said he did not care how soon compulsion came.

What, by the way, of Lord Kitchener's death on H.M.S.

"Hampshire" in June, 1916? I believe in the official view—the ship struck a mine by misadventure. But I meet reasonable people convinced that treachery, a hidden hand, destroyed him; that the ship was waited for and torpedoed. One story, printed last year, is that the Tsaritzza, by private wire, told Potsdam that Kitchener was about to start, and that a German submarine was put on the track of the "Hampshire"—a mare's nest, like most of the mean stories told against the broken and doomed House of Romanoff. Still, the secret that Kitchener was starting for Russia ought to have been strictly guarded here. Instead, it leaked out. I heard as early as May 31st or June 1st, that he was almost immediately going on this mission. The thing passed out of my mind, till returning to London on June 5th, I saw in the afternoon papers the news that he and all the members of the mission had gone down in the "Hampshire." Many people in England must have known of the forthcoming mission. There were then plenty of uninterned enemies here, and the theory that the enemy's submarines were somehow informed of Lord Kitchener's movements is not unreasonable. However, whether the enemy was informed or not, I believe H.M.S. "Hampshire" by pure mischance struck a mine.

We hear little about Lord Kitchener to-day. Other military stars are in the sky. His appears to have set.

It interested me, one evening in France, a year after the "Hampshire" blew up, when the officer next to me at dinner asked, did I not think that, when the war was over, the world would find in Kitchener its outstanding, pre-eminent figure? He objected to the whole Gallipoli Report, because it contained a reproach against Kitchener; he viewed the Mesopotamia Report in much the same light. It would have been absurd to suppress either Report on such grounds; but how excellent it is to meet a man who, in all straits, stands by those he has firmly or passionately believed in! The habit may be a luxury on which the world puts sometimes a heavy tax; and from that point of view, it is discount-

enanced, especially among poor men. Still, this particular luxury is worth the tax. Let us stand fast by early enthusiasm for the few great figures and ideals. Whether they were founded on myths or not, is immaterial. That they were fresh and unprompted by wordly motive is all in their favour. An early enthusiasm is an intimate friend.

The Kitchener of the Palestine Exploration, the Kitchener of Omdurman, of Khartoum, of South Africa, and the Kitchener of the New Armies early in the war, was, to my view, always a great and faithful public servant. He was a very hard worker from early youth, and his concentration on detail and grasp of it were extraordinary. It was also, in military matters, encyclopaedic. Many instances of this might be given. Here is one given me by Colonel Cregan. "When I was acting as C.R.E. at Rawul Pindi in 1907, Kitchener paid us a surprise visit, and announced his intention of inspecting the waterworks, a source of some anxiety, as the supply of water depended on rather fortuitous conditions. I had only just arrived, and had not yet seen the works. I contrived to get a clear hour or so at them before K. arrived with the Divisional General and Staff, and, picked up the complicated details—charts, etc.—connected with the supply. When he arrived, I began explaining all I had just been posted up in. As I got deeper and deeper into details, I could see the faces of the surrounding Staff getting longer and longer, until I finally reached the climax in a complicated chart, which to the local expert showed clearly the state of affairs at a glance, but which to the uninitiated must have been a Chinese puzzle. I made the best I could of this, but felt I was not very clear or convincing, and began to wonder what would happen next. When suddenly Lord K. himself took up the tale, and turning to the General, made the whole matter clear and simple in a few illuminating sentences."

To return to the question of how to get the men : there prevailed a vague notion that ultimately the men would be got somehow by recruiting, especially with Lord

Derby on the warpath. "Send for Lord Derby," when the figures dropped after a spurt, became quite a formula, as when the Liberals used to be in difficulties, there was a cry of "Send for Hartington." So it drifted and drifted, till it drifted into piecemeal compulsion out of semi-voluntaryism. I went to the House to hear a portion of the debate on the second reading of the Military Service Bill. It was not exactly a noble measure, for it arranged to take the unmarried men and leave the married. The average young married man has more to fight for and defend than the average young unmarried man, but this Bill left Benedick free to stay at home, and ordered his unmarried brother to be off and fight for him. That was politic, however. There were three things in the debate that amused one. The first was Mr. Asquith's smile of satisfaction; the opponents of the measure had been diddled: and they looked it.

The Conservatives cheered loudly. Conscription had been achieved, and yet they were not likely to lose their seats or come into any public odium—for Mr. Asquith and Mr. Arthur Henderson were doing it for them, pulling their chestnuts out of the fire. And that was politic, too.

When Mr. Henderson in his speech discovered, without laughing, that, after all, there was nothing so very dreadful about compulsion—was it not implicit in Trade Unionism indeed?—one felt a little staggered. However, it was all quite in keeping with adroit party arrangement and the accepted Ministerial way. The best speech of the debate was Mr. Philip Snowden's. Here was something of an orator, and an orator who does believe in what he speaks, and who holds to principles.* I disagreed and disagree with Mr. Snowden in everything he says and believes about the war. But we know what he is driving at. His flag may be black, but he nails it to the mast. So many of the others nail their flag to the weathercock—a metaphor I heard Lord De

* Lord Brougham wrote of the Party System: "There is nothing more untrue than to represent principle as at the bottom of it; interest is at the bottom, and the opposition of principle is subservient to the opposition of interest."

Morley exploit in the House of Lords during the Home Rule Bill debate in 1893. We know what men like Mr. Snowden are at; it is hard to know what the others will be at if the breeze veers round. I prefer the man who sticks to a wrong view until he is convinced against it, than the man who waits servile on public opinion and never backs a losing cause.

So we shambled into conscription, and the "Saturday" was at last supposed to be justified of its crusade since October, 1914. I confess I felt rather raw that the Unionist leaders, who as everyone knew really favoured the thing, never put out a finger to help the "Review" from October, 1914, to the summer of 1915, when the crowd began to rush in, and the waiters on opinion who had hitherto merely repeated the *cliché* of the time: "Of course, we must have conscription *if* it is necessary"; varying this with the comfortable man's, "Leave it to Kitchener." Compulsion was a very hated and unpopular demand until far on into 1915; and it was an unpleasant thing to back—openly. Directly the popular breeze changed, the time-servers rushed in to back it with shrieks. How one loathed that!

There were, however, one or two hearty exceptions. Mr. Walter Long gave us a right hand of fellowship. He wrote me early in 1915 a straight, clear, fearless letter in favour of compulsory service. That is what one expects in such a man. I have heard people who think themselves intellectual make light of Walter Long. There has not been in public life, in my time, a more upright, outright English gentleman. Old-fashioned Conservative, perhaps; not highly imaginative in matters Irish and other, perhaps. Still, one likes A MAN.

I look on Walter Long as the best man on the Conservative benches. I hate committees; but it was a singular pleasure to attend his little committee on cadets in 1915. I believe it was killed by the more impatient believers in conscription.

Outside party politics, I got in two quarters encouragement I was glad of. In February, 1915, I met Lord Northcliffe in Scotland. He put me on his salmon water.

He chaffed me about the "Saturday"; and I had an undefined suspicion then that he was laying large plans for a campaign that would drive conscription through before long, if sheer military necessity ere then did not do it. Not long afterwards in England, he gave me leave to fire away in some signed articles in the "Daily Mail." I leapt to that chance. At once correspondence poured in on me—the public were beginning to bite a little, particularly the wives of men who had joined up. Besides, William Wray Skilbeck, the Editor of "The Nineteenth Century and After," did not turn me away, though of course he was well aware that the thing was viewed askance by the great ones, by the pink of the party proprieties. I rather think—writing from memory—that Mr. Bonar Law (for whom I have a sincere respect) had markedly discouraged it; I am sure that Mr. Arthur Henderson, then in the Cabinet, had described it as unpatriotic. I half expected I should be stopped by the Censor. My hope was that I was not important enough for Dora to notice. Possibly to that I did owe my freedom. Anyway, we kept at it, only breaking off for a week or so now and then. We had our attenuated staff, including Walter Shaw Sparrow, who joined us soon after a remarkable letter of his had been printed in the "Westminster Gazette." Many people wrote and spoke well later on in favour of obligatory service for the war. Lord Milner always treated the question worthily. The trouble was that most of them took such a long time before weighing in. But Shaw Sparrow's letter was better than any of these others. The bitter root of the thing was in it. Strangers wrote and asked why I allowed Shaw Sparrow to hold forth on such themes? Was he not an authority on the architecture of bridges and on furniture? But because a man has studied and written on bridges and furniture is no reason why he should not be intelligent about some topic in politics—and the military service question, rightly considered, is nineteenth politics.

We did not let the question pass from the columns of

the paper after the first Act ; and, through the early part of 1916, were still pounding away, "Vieille" with his heavies, and the rest of us with our irritating machine guns. But by then the charm of unpopularity—there is a sort of naughty charm in unpopularity—had largely passed. Everyone had started calling for conscription, those who had been silent being now loudest in their advocacy of it. But I must except a few statesmen and papers. I have always respected those statesmen and papers. Moreover, they had some really strong arguments. For instance, the argument that great conscribed armies incite "militarism." Of course, that is absolutely true : and whilst nations conscribe and arm to the teeth, we shall never escape from the constant threat of world war and the butchery of millions. Only, there was one thing, I think, they should not have overlooked. The voluntarism of those days never was true voluntarism. It was full of threats, jeers, and ridiculous white feathers. It was pushed by a series of insulting posters, etc., plastered over our public buildings and our privies. I hated the idea of bullying men into military service. When any literature of that sort found its way into my office, I tore it up, and put it in the waste-paper basket. One such voluntary recruiting legend came to me one night, bearing a foreign name, and requesting insertion as a free advertisement "as matter." I tore that up into extra small bits in a rage after I had seen the paper through.

I saw it stated not long ago by a clever writer on military subjects in the "Westminster Gazette" that "Society" is, or was, very anxious to secure conscription. I know nothing about that. The last people I should have thought of consulting on such a subject were those who form "Society." One would value its opinion on pearl necklaces : not on political matters.

There were some officially conveyed appeals to stop calling for conscription ; for instance, that Lord Kitchener thought we had better go on with the voluntary system as we had started with it, though possibly it had its faults ; that swopping horses whilst crossing a stream,

etc. They fell on a deaf ear. Also, for some time, I used to get a fair show of abusive postcards and letters, chiefly anonymous. I was asked, was I going to join up myself and go to the front? This was a personal question which did not affect the merits of the argument. However, I may mention that several times after this conscription campaign, I was anxious to get to the front in France, and twice I definitely offered myself for any sort of service which it might be thought I could do there for the Army. Colonel Arthur Keene, a very kind friend of mine, was then at the War Office, and he advised one or two capacities in which he thought I might get work at the front. I took his advice and tried. I was refused politely and point-blank. I was advised, instead, by Authority, to go in for Propaganda—the propagation of the Gospel among the heathen at home. I tried to get to the front, not because I wanted to get shot, or from heroical motives. I did so because the front interested me tremendously. I felt that to be of that crusading throng was a great experience; that it was to live—while you lived. True, after a man is fifty and over, he might soon snap when he reached the front. But it was worth that risk. We have to go west sooner or later. A common view is that it is the business of every man in middle life to collect a sufficient number of pieces of gold against old age—unless his father has collected them for him—and to settle down to the comfortable life. A disgusting line.

I have said that a question I often turned over, in regard to the "Review," was whether it was practicable in journalism to put new wine into old bottles. I had my misgivings lest such a vintage might smash the bottles. But when the war came, it was essential to run on a straight-speaking, hard-driving line; to brush aside cobwebbed traditions about old weeklies being suited rather as correctives of the strong diet of the dailies than as caterers of it themselves.

We wanted a thorough anti-German line—no finnikin reservations and dessicated doubts of tepid intellectualism. I disliked modern Germanism, though impressed

by its power and capacity—and its marvellous music : and I resolved to get that dislike into the bones and blood of the "Review." There was not, I think, much hedging in its line about the war once we got going. We urged internment of enemy aliens ; and, in 1916, after the Zeppelin raids on London, we urged air reprisals on German cities. Reprisals against prisoners I never countenanced. I was convinced that reprisals on prisoners would fail in their effect, or even add to the sufferings of our men in Germany. Air reprisals are in a very different category. They keep up the fighting spirit at our home, they embarrass the enemy in his home. Reprisals adopted merely for vengeance would, of course, be feeble policy, serving no useful purpose. "Vengeance is a kind of wild justice" ; policy built on that would never prevail against a power like modern Germany. I cordially disliked the Germans, their military arrogance—as displayed in the Zabern incident in 1914—their naked commercial instincts. But I always felt their Kaiser to be a remarkable character. A very sinister character, granted. So was Napoleon, whom Blucher proposed, after Waterloo, to punish with death, a proposal the Duke of Wellington rejected. But strong-willed, imployable, as Montaigne would have said, insatiably ambitious. All his speeches for years past have, moreover, pointed, with their curious mixture of God and gunpowder, to a vivid imagination. Writing him off as a ridiculous "drawcansir figure," prancing from front to front during the war, is natural enough, but there is no chance of history exhibiting him in this light. On the other hand, too much has been made in the past of his literary and purely intellectual gifts ; set a few of his utterances on this head beside Frederick the Great's letters to Voltaire, and they are at once seen to be quite cheap.

As to the internment of enemy aliens, I am only sorry that, in the press of other questions, I did not urge it oftener and more drastically. It was sound, logical, humane. All persons in this country demonstrably German are not, as the superstitious assert, "spies."

Numbers of them—certainly the majority—have not, for one thing, the opportunity to spy. A German barber—out of all the heads of hair he crops in a year—how much information of the faintest value to the German War Staff is he likely to collect! But there were other and far more cogent reasons for interning mercifully all Germans. Lord Kitchener, who handled this question early in the war, seems to have overlooked the reasons. It is humane and orderly to intern the enemy aliens, in order to guard against abominable man-hunts which are always likely to break out among the civilians in large towns after an air raid or the shelling of a coast town. In the summer of 1917, in the East End, after an air raid, I saw an angry mob chasing a poor wretch, thought to be a German. There were the earlier shop-breaking riots in the same quarter, too, following a raid.

In those days, one used constantly hear all manner of rumours, especially in 1915, about "the hidden hand" and its conveying boxes of sweetmeats to German prisoners. I was even rung up on the telephone once or twice in regard to some chocolates which were said to have passed hands in this manner. I believed the thing to be arrant nonsense. True, these stories have been, probably still are, firmly believed by many educated people. But so are West-End fortune tellers. Love of mystery is planted deep in most men and women. It is akin to "the desire of the moth for the star," "the devotion to something afar from the sphere of our sorrow"—and the sphere of our daily routine and humdrum needs. Love of mystery is not degrading. It is refining and elevating, except where the imagination is of a low order, when it resorts to the cheap and banal—for instance to trashy stories of the great ones of society and politics conveying sweetmeats in defiance of Dora. German influence in England was a hard fact, whereas those tales were soft fiction.

The Germans wormed themselves into the English—but the English were complaisant about it. The upper and middle classes were complaisant because they often looked to enjoy German money or to employ German

brains. The more one thinks of and looks into it, the less is one inclined to believe that the Germans, in commerce and society, always played Tarquin to our Lucretia. Who in the immediate past has been responsible for encouraging the Germans so to worm themselves into our system? The responsibility must be shared between society, the City, party politics. They have been the *participes criminis*. Not the masses. Not the Crown. The Reigning Family to-day is robust British. It has been perfectly faithful all through this war. By decadent people it has for years past been regarded as even too insular, too English.

Society, City, and party politics share the stigma of suffering the German to establish himself here. At the root of the evil has been money. No section of politicians, nor the capitalist, nor society, made the war. But, between them, the three certainly are responsible for the hold which Germanism had upon us before the war. They brought the Germans into politics; utilised their brains in factories and workshops, their hawkish commercial proclivities in finance and the City; and invited them to week-end parties.

During my last few months at the "Saturday," the Russian Revolution broke out. The paeans of joy which burst forth in this country forbade at the outset a critical word, even a critical thought. Silence itself would have been suspect as during the Terror in Paris. To pass for a good citizen, a man had to fling his cap in the air, and proclaim: "This wins the war!" My recollection is that we did not succeed in getting our cap at the "Saturday" as high in the air as was seemly, and in the course of a week or two, we sat with it on. As everybody knows, the members of the Government, individually and collectively, declared themselves for the Russian Revolution. They claimed for one another the honour of having helped to fire the train. There was a friendly emulation between the Tory wing and the Radical wing of the Government in glorifying the Revolution. There was little in it in zeal between Carlton and National Liberal Clubs—Jacobins all. The enthusiasm for the

Revolution lived on into the summer, then it waned, and great numbers of those who had been exalting the Revolution as a war winner set to work to curse it as a war loser.

Viewing those events dispassionately now, it is clear that the Cabinet was right in the line it took, though later it was made to look foolish. It was as right in its policy—as it was wrong in its predictions. Had Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Balfour and the other Ministers, opposed the Revolutionists, held out a hand or a hint to the Tsar, the Russian Front would have dissolved months before it did dissolve. It is even conceivable that the Russians would have gone in at once with Germany. There were members of the Government whose enthusiasm was sincere and spontaneous. There were others who had mental reservations, but withheld these, and joined in the great public thanksgiving to God for having bestowed on us the Revolution. Both these sections acted naturally. After all, we were not out in this war to back up emperors and absolutism ; on the contrary, we were, if anything, out for “the cease of majesty.” The one master aim was to win the war. It was imperative to try to keep Russia in on our side. Suppose the excesses of the opening chapters of the Revolution had been much more cruel and bloody than they actually were, a Robespierre or a St. Just in power from the start—it would still have been our policy to try to “keep in” with the Revolution.

It is not cynical to say this ; for it is obvious that to break with the Russian Revolutionists, or to dissociate ourselves from them, would have been to play into the claws of Germany.

Where so many politicians went astray, almost incredibly astray, was not in policy but in prognostication. They apparently did really believe that it was merely a revolution against Rasputin, a crazy priest, and against a gang of Germanised rascals controlling the Tsar ; and that, when these had been put away, the Russian people would take the field against Germany as they had never taken it before. Pall Mall believed the Revolution

might be got through nicely in a few weeks. Ministers themselves could not have believed this, but they did believe that the Revolution was going to help them with the war—that Kerensky and themselves might be able to ride upon the storm, and direct the whirlwind as soon as the German group was got rid of. They looked to be able to deliver the goods—i.e., munitions—at Archangel, and to bring back on the ships that carried those goods, abundant corn for Allied loaves. It was an ingenious scheme, and the coolest organising brain was to carry it through. Unluckily, it overlooked the origin and meaning of the Revolution. The Revolution, though it started with a flare-up over Rasputin which thrilled the nursemaids of Kensington Gardens—as the French Revolution is said to have started with a flare-up over a diamond (not a pearl) necklace—was a huge social and economic earthquake. It arose because millions of people in Russia were landless, moneyless, foodless.

A statesman, speaking to me, a few months later, of the Revolution, said : “ It is extraordinary how we were all deceived in it ! ” I asked : “ In what way deceived ? ” He replied with a touch of impatience : “ Why, we all believed, of course, that the Russians would fight with us against the German autocracy.” But millions of hungry, destitute peasants, downtrodden for generations by a cruel system of absolutism, are not likely, when revolution comes, to fling themselves enthusiastically into a war against a foreign power. The precedent of the French Revolution of 1789—on which Ministers in some degree, perhaps, based their hopes—was quite misleading ; and apart from that, the Germans were playing the game too craftily, by holding their hand on the Eastern Front.

It was, then, “ extraordinary how we were all deceived ” in the Russian Revolution. But it was allowable to point out, even in those first weeks, that bread and land were at the root of it, and that we were somewhat overdoing our ecstasies here about making the earth secure henceforth for Democracy, as if the iteration of that Greek word would get us out of all our troubles in the

East, and assuage the Revolution in a week or two.

We took that line at any rate in the "Saturday," and the Defence of the Realm Act allowed us to do so. But I abstained from abuse of the Russians. I felt, moreover, that to abuse the Russian Revolution would be as useful as abusing earthquakes. Besides, I had sympathy with the oppressed, wretched millions of Russian peasantry. I have never learnt to be glib over such expressions as "all the democracies," and "making the earth secure for democracy." But that does not mean one is not in sympathy with oppressed nationalities and hungry millions. Nor does it mean that one favours infernal autocracy such as was displayed in Germany and Austria, or rotten autocracy such as was displayed in Russia.

The Tsar was a patriot, though weak, misguided, unfortunate, like Louis XVI.; and, like Louis, he was cruelly done to death. But revolutions always are cruel; and so are earthquakes.

This line as to Russia was not that recommended by the authorities, but I am bound to say I was not interfered with. Earlier, I was brought to book slightly once or twice by the censorship—for instance, in printing an article from the front describing a concert in which some German prisoners took part, an article, through an oversight, not submitted to the Press Bureau. But apart from military news, the Censorship was mild towards weekly papers. I never submitted an article by "Vieille Moustache" during the two years he wrote for us, and only once came into some reproach when Sir Edward Grey passed a harsh word or two on the paper over a Dutch question. Nor did we submit any article on the question of Voluntaryism and Compulsion. Foreign policy articles and communications from the Front I almost invariably sent to the Press Bureau before publication.

After everything has been said about the Censor in the war, it remains that he did not run our papers for us as it appears the Censor often did on the Continent, among Allies as well as in enemy countries. The Censor

had some regard for editors ; had he not in his day himself edited two great daily papers ?

When I started with the Review in 1913, I hoped to be able to do a good deal of independent literary work, and played with the idea of a long novel to follow on the lines of "The Leaning Spire," a book of short stories which Alston Rivers published for me in 1911. I had to abandon it. The routine of a weekly paper leaves a man little zest or time for steady literary work ; that routine of seeing contributors ; deciding about policy as new subjects come up or old ones take fresh forms ; striving to keep abreast of the daily budget of letters to be answered ; reading manuscripts—why are the best always written in an undecipherable hand ?—poring over the "make-up" form, and often altering it as the week advances ; finally, reading and passing for press the whole issue by Thursday night or Friday morning at latest, first in "pulls" or galley, then in page. After five days of this, my inclination to settle down to literary work in the remaining two days of the week had gone. Besides, it is the hand of little use that hath the finer sense for literature. Journalism, daily or weekly, leads to facility rather than felicity in composition. As to style, that never was acquired, never can be, by journalistic or by literary application. Style is born in the disposition of a man. Literary form can be acquired by study and labour : style can never be. There is a record of a weekly paper—famous alike among Scots and English—which in the end was written by two men, virtually from cover to cover, a paper incisive in politics and the humanities ; and its producers were at the same time adding both verse and prose to literature. But to few has it been given to edit, and at the same time to write with good effect week after week.

Besides, in running a weekly, there are all sorts of lesser points to be considered. At the "Saturday," I did make an attempt to keep out certain formulae handed on from one generation to another as things precious. I am convinced that the public does not understand or care at all about the n ; that, if anything,

it laughs at them. Yet, we simply cannot resist using them ; and I found that my attempt was useless ; for, if I strictly removed them from the leading articles and notes of the staff, I commonly made up by inserting one or two of them into my own articles and notes. The formulæ I mean are such as the following : " As we warned our readers last week " ; " as we confidently predicted last year " ; " as we have never wavered in asserting " ; " as our readers will doubtless remember, we have from the first," etc.

They fail of their effect. The reader does not doubtless remember ; or, if he does remember by any chance, it does not interest him. Be prescient in journalism ; but do not call your readers' attention to the fact that you were prescient last week, or year. It only bores or puzzles him. I have heard readers say that it makes no difference to them whether their favourite paper said or didn't say such and such a thing ; the only thing of interest is what it says to-day. I sometimes think a standing order might be given to the compositor or printer's reader to query or strike out all stereotypes of the kind, editorial or other. I have often gratefully accepted compositors' accidental changes in my "copy" : sometimes these have been good and fresh. On the other hand, one has suffered pain from compositors. Once I quoted Plato in an article I rather plumed myself on. When I opened the paper at breakfast next day, I turned to that article. It spoilt my breakfast. Plato was printed Pluto.

I let it pass. I had to. It was not possible after seven days' gnashing silence to announce that by " a clerical slip " the philosopher had been confused with the King of Hades. Oddly enough, no reader wrote to protest. If some poor little infinitive had been split, or some dull, obscure date had been printed wrong, a dozen people would have written to humble one.

Misquotations are most fatal. " To-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new " is sure to draw an angry buzz of protest. Charles Lamb rather prided himself on a misquotation. Certainly it has its merit : it shows the

writer has not had at his elbow reference books and books of quotation. But it is fatal to misquote Dickens. The line should be drawn at that. Once in a signed article in "The Standard," I wrote of Dick Swiveller as saying to the Marchioness: "Hullo, here's a church. Let's go in, etc." For weeks after, I was snowed under by protests from readers all over the country. My friend, H. A. Gwynne, Editor then of "The Standard," also suffered for my offence. He was very good natured: he always has been—though once he suffered fourteen years of my "copy"—but directed me to put it right. I withdrew the misquotation unconditionally next week. If you are going to misquote, confine yourself to the "dead languages." "Pickwick" is perilous unless you know it perfectly.

In my case, difficulties, through being shorthanded, heaped up as the war went on. There was one week, when I found myself completely alone at the "Saturday," so far as literary or technical aid went; and that week I had, besides writing most of the "Notes of the Week" and at least one leader—to read, revise, "make-up," and see through on Thursday night without colleague or counsellor. It was quite a relief when the printer's messenger rang the bell, and I went downstairs to receive from him the printer's final envelopes. Finally, at W. H. Smith's—for I was not actually my own compositor and machinist as well as my own staff that week—having handed in my last page passed for press, I am not sure I had not to hurry off on special constabulary duty for the rest of the night. If it did not chance to be that particular night, it was many another, for during several years of the war, from August, 1914, it was my lot to be editor by day and policeman after dark. I now and then found a four hours' night beat in B. Division verge on monotony after a day's writing and editorial work. Six p.m. to 10 p.m. at Cheval Place, and 2 a.m. to 6 a.m., were rather hateful; for the first meant no dinner and the second no sleep. But the second was the worse, the cats being perfectly horrible then. No bombs, grenades, aerial torpedoes nothing but tom cats after tabbies.

Still, there were faint compensations if only one could appreciate them at the time in the spirit of Emerson. Patrolling electric power works from two till six in the morning—occasionally sitting on an empty sugar case inside the sentry's box after the inspector on his rounds has passed—gives opportunity for reflection. Once it was my lot to patrol there eight hours at a stretch—from 10 p.m. till 6 a.m. The 2 o'clock man having overslept himself or something. But the last two hours of that beat I patrolled in sleep, lying down inside the works on one of the bare engines. It was even practicable, towards the close of the week, to pace out, during these vigils, a leading article for the next issue of the paper, with quite a number of "Notes of the Week." Lines of policy could, moreover, define themselves distinctly on such occasions. At 4.30 a.m., on an icy morning, I found myself fiercely in favour of super-reprisals and double-conscription. At 6 a.m., relieved by the regular police, I took off my armlet, crossed Brompton Road, and crawled home to bed, with the milk. "On the bald street breaks the blank day," exactly expresses the look of London after such a night.

In those times I could not have carried on the "Saturday" but for the kindness of friends, some of whom indeed helped me week after week: Major-General Sir William Knox; Sir James Frazer, of "The Golden Bough," and Lady Frazer; Bishop Frodsham; Colonel Keene; Brigadier-General Stone, who trained the 18th Division for the Somme and took them there; Colonel Cregan and Beatrice Cregan; A. E. Manning Foster; Thomas Hardy; Ralph Hodgson, my old companion, whose noble "Song of Honour" I printed in the autumn of 1913; William Watson; Fielding Hall; Theodore Watts Dunton, who gave me Swinburne's burning little essay on "Sappho"; Major-General Sir Alfred Turner; A. D. Godley; H. E. Marshall; Hugh Walpole; Gilbert Cannan; "R. H.," a sapper in the New Army; Frances Chesterman; Edward Thomas; the Abbe Dimnet; Désiré Welby; Walford Green; W. H. Chesson; Irene Hope Beresford; and Hope Bagenal

("A Sergeant in Kitchener's"), whose wonderful little book I will mention later. All these, and others whom I must not mention, for they wrote anonymously, encouraged me. Alas, several of them have gone west, yet I count them still among my friends. I can still in imagination sit at times with "Vieille," and set him going on the strength of the enemy, and the need to organise all our resources against such an opponent. In his grim fighting spirit, "Vieille" appealed to me as a kind of Old Testament worthy. He was full of love and chivalry as well as of war. Roberts was Bayard to him as Havelock to a generation of Indian heroes. He discovered in 1915 a powerful belief in the present Prime Minister over the wonderful munition crusade, and viewed me, I think, rather askance for not flinging myself into the movement then against drink. Very likely "Vieille" was right and I wrong there, but it was a theme too hotly disputed to be coolly convinced about. One little slip I recall in "Vieille." I sent him for review, a French work on Eighteenth Century campaigning in Silesia. When I next met him during a delightful week-end mixed up with war and trout-fishing at Sherborne St. John, his Hampshire home, "Vieille" proposed to let this review stand over—till the Russians were in Silesia. But, after all, was it a slip?

Colonel Keene, like "Vieille," was one of "Bob's Men." He was of that happy warrior type whom every knight-at-arms would wish to be. War is a bestial, savage business, and its reckoning in men and material is calamitous. Whether the League of Nations be practicable or not, I agree with the spirit that prompts it: I have learnt about war, on the spot. But what will happen with such men as Keene—in whose likeness many a noble nature at the front seems to have been struck—should the League of Nations draw down the curtain on war? Where will be found such niches for these men, unless possibly in the medical service?

CHAPTER VII

WAR FRONTS AND BASES

NEUVE CHAPELLE, March, 1915, moves me as much as any act of arms in the war, except possibly the critical moments of the first battle of Ypres, and the landing of the Lancashires on the beach at Gallipoli. "Neuve Chapelle was disastrous"—granted. "It was a slaughter of the British"—granted. "We were left at the close of it with a scrap of enemy ground in our hands, a worthless result, from the scientific military standpoint—and at what a price was that scrap of ground bought!" I agree with that, too; but one's emotions in war are not severely rational where the element of glory and of self-sacrifice comes in, just as they are not severely rational in peace, where love and death come in. And the way in which the young British army gave its blood at Neuve Chapelle was imperishably glorious.

Neuve Chapelle moves me, too, because it had such a modest fame compared with various epic struggles against the German Army whilst that Army was in all its strength and pride, and British arms were learning, through valour and devotion, to prevail in a long trench war.

Some people say there never should have been any Neuve Chapelle, any 1916 Somme, any battle of Champagne, such as cost the French Army in 1915 a fearful price for a stretch of rubbishy ground. I disagree, and should do so, though all the commanders of the armies, let alone commanders of the pen, were solemnly to declare that series of bloody drawn battles—most of them were drawn—should have been avoided by skill

and method in the Allies soon after the war began. Not if a Napoleon had dominated and forced the armies of the Entente from the start, should we have marched to victory in 1914, 1915, or 1916. Genius, I grant, the demonic vision in war, was to seek on our side—as on the enemy side. But even imagine genius flung into the scale on our side, it is vain to overlook that the German Army in those years, and all through 1917, was an extraordinarily massive machine. We could only wear it down by man power and munition power. We had to dree our weird for three or four years at least, owing to pre-war unreadiness. There was no short-cut, no beautiful thought-out way, to victory over that Colossus. We had to be incessantly striking, suffering, bleeding. We had to have our Neuve Chapelles, and the French their battles of Champagne. Of course, very many avoidable individual mistakes were made by the Allies all through those three or four years of the war. Lives were sacrificed by bad leading in the field: by stupidity; by the refusal or sheer incapacity to think things out. The men often went over the top in 1915 to be killed by an enemy who knew quite well beforehand what exactly we were going to do. Those mistakes could have been avoided. But it is another thing to pretend we could have beaten the German in a year, or two or three years, by organising ourselves better in the field, and by planning it all out comprehensively and intellectually beforehand, and that we could have won nicely without any costly, bloody, indecisive actions, such as Neuve Chapelle, Loos, Festubert and the rest. They who say it, miss the main proposition of the war—the huge strength and scientific elaboration of the German machine. We could not sit still till we were ripe for victory—we should have gone rotten.

I saw nothing of Neuve Chapelle, only knew of it through imagination, eked out by hearsay. Nor have I seen even its field. I should like to go there some day, and have the struggle described to me by a man who was through it. It was not till a year and a half later that,

thanks to a friend in the Old Army, I got my first view of the Front, at the height of the battle of the Somme. I took no notes about that experience, and many of my impressions have since dimmed—but not that passage on the officers' boat from Folkestone to Boulogne! I believe I was the solitary civilian on board bound for the Front, though there were a few civil servants with us, returning from London to the East. The rest was the Middle Ages on earth again, the high romance of tourney and crusade—and yet I was travelling with all that was freshest and most uplifting spiritually in twentieth-century manhood. A man must have been curiously unimaginative, a log or clod of earth, who admitted to such a scene as that bore away no excellent memory. Arnold could visualise a scene in the Middle Ages, their knight-errantry and crusading fervour, when he crossed even in times of peace. He saw his golden field of Ardres aglow—

“As if the Middle Age
Were gorgeous on earth again.”

He saw a thousand knights reining their steeds—

“To watch this line of sandhill run.”

But how much more vivid and convincing would his vision have been could he have crossed with that great-hearted crowd in all the animation that marked the way to the heroic grounds of Flanders, Picardy, and Artois! When the last word has been said about the senseless waste of war, it remains that nothing in the realms of reality makes such a master appeal to the eye and mind of man as great war scenery. The supernatural alone has the power to kindle a livelier imagination, to steep men in sensation more powerful than the scene and drama of battle. But then the sensation of the supernatural is denied to the vast majority of people. Only a very few have more than a pale half-belief in the supernatural; the rest play with the idea of spiritual beings whom they would like to believe in absolutely. Supposing half the people in this country were intellectually convinced

that they could at will pass behind the veil and traffic with beings in another world—that half would become largely atrophied to ordinary occupations and ambitions. The importance of the present life would wizen for them, as it has for a few recluses, fervent and complete believers in the dogmas of their faith, in the positive truth of revelation. They would recognise that the reality behind the veil, the reality which they must presently be part of, is so infinitely more important than the reality in our speck of time and speck of matter—this life and this world. All sense of proportion with you, or with me, or with any intelligent person, would insist on this if without reservation we believed absolutely. How could we be wrapped up in our earthly careers, or dispute warmly about economic and financial questions, methods of governments, what would the City and the Stock Exchange be to us, when we felt sure that we were bound for an infinite life *just ahead*, were already in touch with those who were living in it?

The supernatural, for those few who have found and are in touch with it, must make the most powerful and absorbing appeal of all. Failing that, war is the greatest drama, and I don't think anything I have seen on the field, or in the stir and medley just behind a battle, has touched me more than that scene on the Boulogne boat. I saw it several times later—but it was not quite the same. The crowd of infantry and artillery officers, khaki with red and gold caps mingled, the freshness and great heart and boundless good humour of youth, its high hopes, and its laughing complaints of the shortness of the leave now ended, this made an extremely winning, beautiful scene. There was about it nothing of the swashbuckler, no boasting spirit or false pride of valour. A perfectly natural, wholesome exhibition of manliness. Many of the men on that boat were bound for the Somme. Many of them lie there to-day.

I motored ninety miles or so, from Boulogne to Amiens, and slept my first night in France at the Hotel de Rhin, where German officers had stayed for a short time before the retreat from the Marne in 1914.

Next morning I went up to Englebelmer. A turn in the road took me abruptly out of the zone of transport, lorries, and Army Service Corps material of all sorts, into the zone of heavy artillery and of recruits repeating the ordinary drill, then endlessly going forward all over England. The woods, beginning to turn colour, were packed with men and horses and tents, and in the open a company or two of a Scottish Regiment were forming fours, right and left turning, as if it were the Guards, Cricket Ground at Chelsea, or the Park. A few hundred yards off, a battery of howitzers was pounding Thiepval. I climbed up a ladder on to a platform in a very high, straight tree, the observation post for the battery, and watched the shells bursting along the ridge two miles or so distant. It occurred to me in the course of the day that observing war is not so extremely perilous as represented; and the impression insisted. The proof of a peril lies in its killing or other casualty. I believe that if a complete casualty list of non-combatants on all the fronts, the enemy side as well as Entente, were compiled, it would prove an inconsiderable one. Yet, thousands of non-combatants during the four and a half years of war must have visited those fronts. Were you to add to them the civilians who day after day continued to work the land a few miles behind the zone of operations, yet also within range easily of heavy guns, the list might be much longer. French peasants became so unconcerned after a time by the din and display of war that it was not rare to see them digging and weeding a few hundred yards from the spot on which an enemy gun was putting shells in an attempt to reach and silence a French or British battery.

The cause of this comparative immunity for the non-combatant is simple: the field of modern war is so vast and one man's person is so small that the peril is not great unless shells are falling thick on or round the piece of ground on which he happens to be standing, crawling or motoring. And only occasionally does that happen. True, it is not the duty of those who look after visitors to the fronts, and who take them into the

trenches, and communication trenches, O.P.'s, dug-outs, mine craters—or through towns that are subject more or less to daily or nightly shell fire—to keep their charges out of artillery range. That would be impossible if the visitor wished to see anything of the line and of the immense crowded preparation behind it. But it is their duty, and their interest, to pick and choose the ground; and in any case not to risk a good military motor. Where a road is being shelled, your guide will usually turn back; and, to reach the place you are bound for, he will take another road. There are enough roads, as a rule, to afford him a fairly liberal choice; how many miles of new military roads were made on the British Front alone in France and Belgium for the war? Hundreds of thousands of miles of them, I suppose, which are being turned back into arable land,

Non-combatants certainly have lost their lives at the front, sometimes at their first visit, and at a spot, to all human calculation quite safe at the time. Also, non-combatants, in or out of khaki, whose occupation, perforce, takes them frequently to the front when an action is going on, or when things are quiet there, have been killed. But not often. For one thing, the frequent visitor to the danger zone, soldier or civilian, grows to understand the ropes, and to avoid unnecessary risks. He does not wish for a halo of shrapnel.

Every non-combatant going fairly often into the back danger zone of war, or, at comparatively quiet seasons, into the front danger zone, will have adventures, thrills. They do not necessarily kill, but they warn him to be circumspect.* The appetite to be in danger, once

* Coming out of a dark, stuffy hole in the ground one day, a minute fort for some machine gunners, I stood at the entrance and watched an occasional shell bursting, about two hundred yards off, on, I think, a road or track through a wilderness of misery and filth. There was a shell-hole two or three yards from me filled with horrible stagnant water. I turned to look what refuse was floating in it, and as I turned a heavy shell fell on the road behind me, and three or four fragments dropped just over my head into the water, making it swirl and bubble up. Thinking another shell might follow, I promptly retired into the entrance of the hole again. My companion emerged at that moment. "Ah," he said, "now that is a good illustration of the use of a helmet. Suppose you had not had a helmet on, and one of those

that danger has been demonstrated, is soon appeased among most people in the war-zone. For example, a patch of quite fresh shell holes along a road one is motoring over, still more on a piece of rough ground on which one is walking, is not a welcome sight, and one does not linger about it. Whereas the old shell-hole filled with stagnant water, and tainted obviously by things worse than stagnancy, is—as a rule—friendly. I suppose no one ever felt much apprehension wandering—in daylight—amidst the hideous, repulsive, old shell-holes in the Flanders mud, or in the dry, overgrown ones elsewhere, unless the ground was being shelled at the time. It is the good brown earth which is so menacing in the war-zone; earth with the wholesome spade and plough freshness about it—and what is fresher and more wholesome ordinarily than new turned soil, the light glistening on it?

To recognise what is not true peril in the war-zone, one must try to form an idea of the risks run by the actual fighting forces; by the men going over the top into action, or on a raid; by the fighting or observing airmen; by the gunner whose battery is being searched out by enemy shells; by the runner and despatch rider; by the tank crew preparing the way for the infantry; by the stretcher-bearers at the aid-post; possibly above all—though who that has not tasted them nearly all can tell for sure?—by the men in the first line of defence whose trenches are being stormed hour after hour by high explosive and whirlwinds of metal. When you have considered these cases a little, and then recalled your own experiences as a non-combatant, as a detached observer, you cannot but recognise that you rarely were in gravest peril. There was the semblance, the sauce of it; not a disagreeable one, certainly, not so sordid

bits of shell had struck you on the head, it might have inflicted a nasty scalp wound. Whereas if it had hit you on the helmet you would not have been inconvenienced." It occurred to me, however, that there are other parts of the person which may be struck by bits of shell, and that these are not guarded by a helmet. The spot could not, for war, be called very perilous, though a good deal of shell was tumbling about in an erratic way, but I was reasonably glad to get away from it and back to the motor. You feel snuggler even in an open motor. It goes so quickly!

as being all but run over by a taxi in a dark street, or being peppered whilst covert shooting. A little of the sauce is quite enough for that day, however.

During that visit, I passed through Albert and Fricourt, and got up as far as Contalmaison, returning past what was Mametz wood and through what was Mametz village. The wood was still there, though there was not a living tree in it, nothing but ghostly, barked trunks, with a hideous litter of stripped branches underneath, mingled with other battle débris. The open fields were, in those days, largely clear of the human wreckage, but I believe the woods must have been thick with it long afterwards. Fricourt had obviously been a village. Portions of walls and large blocks of masonry proved that even at half a mile distance. And here was an odd experience. Descending into one of the deep German dugouts—the cellar of which on the upper floor the British M.O. was using as his reception room at the time—I entered one of the bedrooms, which the Germans had lit by electricity, and furnished with a few French articles, such as a little mirror. That room they had boarded and neatly papered, and the pattern of the paper was identical with one I had chosen fourteen years before for a bedroom in a Hampshire cottage—neat little pink roses. My paper came from a London firm, but no doubt it was made in Germany—maybe at the same manufacturer's from whom the German officers had drawn their supply for the dug-out at Fricourt.

Mametz village had dissolved. It had gone in the attacks of June and July like some ancient town in the desert, buried centuries since by sand storms. Woods apparently have more vitality in modern war than villages. The stumps usually persist. Delville, High Wood, Mametz, Trones and others scattered over the Somme battle-fields were there, clearly to be seen, even at a distance of several miles, when I constantly crossed the ground more than a year later. The trunks themselves held out tenaciously, though the great mass of their limbs had completely vanished. True, there was a tangle of fallen stems and branches in the Somme

woods in 1916 long after the battles had swept through and, except for an occasional shell, contemptuously left them derelict ground ; but the woody material that remained was a fraction only of the original amount. I have wondered, was the rest reduced to powder and ash, added, like gradually decaying matter, to the soil ? The same thought occurred to me in some of the woods round the fiercest fighting near Verdun. I thought the destruction of woody substance about Vaux, for instance, completer than on the Somme ; but a French guide who knew both well, told me that the devastation was on the whole greater on the Somme battlefields, French and British, than about Vaux and Douaumont. What will the French do with the Somme and Ancre battlefields ? To bring back the whole of it to cultivation in the near future, seems to me a task beyond the patience and ingenuity even of that nation of peasant proprietors. The top soil was never very rich ; and that soil has, over large stretches of the Somme, been shelled clean away, the surface to-day being naked chalk. Besides, almost the whole of the Somme battlefields are packed with shell-holes large and small. No plough, hand-driven or motor, can deal with this ground till it has been somewhat brought back to a level surface. It is full of unexploded shells or " duds," and a great number of these must be sought out and removed before the land can be safely farmed. Afforestation seems the best way to treat the Somme, and I imagine the French will plant it with beeches and other trees. Larch would be more profitable, but the soil is not promising for larch. In the Autumn of 1917 I met at Amiens a British officer, who, as an expert, was employed in botanising in the district. He had made, especially about Péronne, I think, a close study of the plant life, and had formed an exact and curious collection dried and pressed. The result of his enquiries seemed to show that a long war of high explosives can modify the character of the flora in a district, thinning out some species, and helping others to flourish ranker. Five or six months after I had looked through his col-

lection, the war returned to the Somme, the Germans swept over, and re-occupied all the old ground. Then I recalled the botanist, and his long and exact enquiries struck me as premature. But August 8th, and the weeks that followed, must have heartened him—if his billet still existed. Linnaeus in khaki had not roamed the Somme in vain.

In those days, when we were not yet half-way across the Somme to Bapaume, there was a casualty or dressing station at Fricourt. There I first saw the Walking Wounded. They were filing down the Contalmaison road, from the battle at Martinpuich then being fought. The casualty station and village were not at the time under shell-fire, though the ground into which the dressing tents were pegged and the dug-out occupied by the R.A.M.C. shivered at times to the work of one of our batteries hard by. So it was possible to see the men coming in and talk with them without falling flat from time to time in obeisance before enemy shells—a course desirable sometimes at an advanced dressing station, still more at an aid post. I meant to describe in detail this scene of the walking wounded at Fricourt, till lately I re-read the chapters in “Fields and Battle-fields,” by “No. 31540,”* which deal with that strange spectacle of war completely *scientized* and brought up-to-date on the medical side. The chapters—notably “The Walpurgi’s Dance”—occur in the most remarkable English book on this war that I have read. Some of them first appeared in the “Saturday Review.” I thought them quite wonderful at the time I printed them; and later, when I had seen something of the war, I knew them to be true. Anyone who wishes to understand the queer world of “*les blessés*” must turn to that book. But I shall say one thing about these Walking Wounded which is not in his pages; namely, that in my own limited experience, I have not heard one of those bloody, muddy, limping, staggering, labelled figures utter a solitary cry, or break into oaths and bitter complaints about his lot. Of course, at times there are cries and

* The book is published by Messrs. Constable, London.

oaths in plenty ; only it happens that I have never once heard them, though I have seen a great many walking wounded, British, German and Italian—which is at least evidence that there is a high endurance among men in war which is at variance with our peace experiences.

Possibly the men and lads who filed into the dressing station at Fricourt, to sit on a bench for a few minutes before being hurried off in a lorry, had walked some miles, and were too tamed and shaken for cries or curses, They certainly did appeal to me as half dehumanised ; a different species, or say sub-species, from the ordinary man, whole or hurt. They took their places on the bench, ate their bread and jam, drank their mugs of coffee or beef-tea, answered questions, more like meek little children than grown-up people. There was something in this not the result of military discipline. Discipline may make a man feel he is becoming a mere machine, but it does not segregate him off into a sub-species from his fellow-soldiers or from civilians. Whereas, I shall always think of those walking wounded at Fricourt as *strangers*.

But I have seen other files of walking wounded, met them along "the tape," before they reached the casualty station, men who had received only some trifling preliminary attention at an aid post right in the battle line ; and, without observing again that sub-species' appearance at Fricourt, I have noted the same absence of cries, curses, complaints. I think that once—in Havrincourt Wood—I did pass two wounded men limping along the tape, who were fairly savage over their hard lot ; at any rate, they looked, they scowled, it. They looked as if they would have liked to strangle a few of their kind. But I never heard a cry, and when I have spoken to a Walking Wounded I have never got anything but a civil word. A Walking Gassed I never chanced to have seen.

I have seen Walking Wounded saluting officers. True, these men belonged to a particular Army noted for its discipline, military punctilio. But neither that Army nor any other requires or expects the Walking

Wounded to salute. I saw in these salutes not mere discipline, rather fortitude in pain and misery, frankly something alien from an ordinary human habit of nursing our hardships and grievances.

I believe that great numbers of men are translated above themselves through the perils and pain and the "primitive mortal needs" of war; and that this as a rule accounts for the behaviour of Walking Wounded.

Cynicism may mock at this; and everyone who has had close professional experience of the Medical Service in war, and of hospitals, can produce, if he chooses, plenty of evidence which points in another direction. "No. 31540" can, with a vengeance. Nevertheless, I shall continue to think that the Walking Wounded in war, on the whole, is a higher animal than he would be in peace; and that the divorce of men from the ordinary peace life, and the sudden engulfing of them in primitive man's needs, and more than his perils, lights some divine spark otherwise hidden. War is an abominable, bestial carnage, full of horrors and agony infinite. But the conduct of vast numbers of men plunged into its horrid shambles is beyond all admiration.

I did not see much of German Walking Wounded—Only, here and there, an occasional case in a drove of German prisoners marching to a Corps cage behind the lines. But I am ready to believe that the same phenomena are to be noticed among them. Some people seem to think it unpatriotic to admit there can be fortitude by the enemy in suffering. I regard that as bosh. I have seen thousands of German prisoners, men, officers, N.C.O's, soon after their capture at the front. They struck me as good men. The officers looked sour sometimes, but I never saw one of the funny splendid specimens in new gloves, etc., we have heard about. I have sometimes doubted his existence. That business has been overdone. The commander of one of the British Armies in France said to a friend of mine, a General who paid him a visit in 1917, that we were up against "a good fighting man" in the German soldier. He added it was "vulgar" to defame and make light

of that soldier. I agree, always have, absolutely. The stories about the German privates being flocks of silly sheep, about their entire want of initiative and so forth, were not worth serious consideration. The treatment of prisoners of war by the Germans was horrible. But I believe that was the deliberate policy of the German military system; and it was aggravated by the bitter hate against England especially of a cruel German civilian element.

As to the German prisoners behind our lines in France, they behaved and worked well. German prisoners in this country during the war worked and behaved well. Proposals to punish them because British prisoners were treated horribly in Germany, to cut down their diet of bread and meat—or of chocolate creams—sprang from ignorance. It was muddle-headed.

Returning from Montauban to Amiens, I saw one of the earliest British tanks ever in action. It had broken down by the roadside, and was covered by some camouflaged material as concealment from German aeroplanes. Nothing was then known by the public about tanks. Even the name was not used. But a few days later the world began talking of tanks, and laughing over their alleged absurd appearance. Since that day I have seen tanks fresh from action, or going into action, parks of tanks practising, tanks shattered by shell fire, tanks lying derelict on old battlefields. I have seen the tank's hull and the tank's engine being made in the factories; all the different parts being "assembled" and being built up on fixed wooden ways like a ship. At the Battle of Cambrai in November, 1917, for the first time on a narrow front, a massed tank surprise attack was made; and throughout that struggle I saw tanks all over the field, some of them knocked out by direct hits by enemy anti-tank or field guns. But I have never felt the least inclination to laugh at a tank, and for the life of me I never could see anything ludicrous in its appearance. Laughing *with* the tank—that is an entirely different matter. An Englishman who has not done that must be a melancholy misanthrope. When the

tanks went up the street at Flers in September, 1916, there must have been good reason to laugh with them loud and long. During Cambrai, I happened to be at Villers au Flos one morning—the second day of the battle, I think—when a leader of tanks came in. “The tanks have done the trick this time, sir,” he said to a Corps General; and there was joy and laughter with the tanks thereat. As a fact the tanks were conceived and built on bold, artistic lines.* About the largest tanks of all there was an impressive dignity.

Nor did any tank I ever saw resemble some huge, strange beast, prehistoric or other. The movements of the earlier type of tank were slow; and that, so far as I have discovered, was the one thing about a tank from which one might labour some faint sense of the ridiculous. But a swan appears to fly slowly—though it does not really do so—and an elephant appears to move slowly; and there is nothing absurd in an elephant. So I never could squeeze a laugh out of a tank at rest or in motion any more than out of a battle cruiser or a steam engine. It was a majestic object in the battlefield. Muirhead Bone’s sketches of tanks well illustrate the might and nobility of this weapon of war.

Sir Thomas Browne declared his preference for the “narrow engines” of nature, with their “more curious mathematics,” over “the majestic pieces of her hand”; and one might apply this to the engines of war. Our factories for three years and more were producing, in immense quantities, all manner of small exquisite contrivances—magnetos, gauges and master gauges; optical instruments of all kinds, the very eyes of the airman, the gunner, the mariner. Without them we could not have prevailed on land, at sea or in the air. I spent weeks in these munition factories during the war, passing

* The hull of a tank looks a simple piece of work; but all the same it is composed of seven hundred and thirty parts, and for the making of these parts there are needed (I am writing of the largest tanks of all, weighing some thirty tons) six hundred and twenty templets. As to the most powerful tank engines made in Great Britain, some of its individual parts had to go through twenty distinct operations before they passed as fit. We have not realised, and perhaps never will, the vast amount of labour in the British factories during the latter part of the war.

from wonder to wonder. But the big tank, the Colossus of our battlefields in France, grew upon one's admiration. It was the noblest machine ever seen on a modern battlefield. Besides, it was an all-British triumph. We invented it. We, long before any other nation, took it into battle; and actually, in the last weeks of the war we were concentrating on a programme which was not only to increase its weight and power and stride for the success of British arms, but to equip our Allies as well. The tank was England's proudest engineering feat in the war; and at the end we were still mightily developing in tanks. I count myself fortunate in having seen in September, 1916, one of the first tanks that went into action, and in October, 1918, one of the last and the mightiest that was to have played its part in the defeat of Germany—the defrauded giant never went over the top, but I had the pleasure, in a British factory, of seeing its armour plates shot at, for a test, by a German rifle.

Whilst I was looking at that tank on the road to Bray-s-Somme, where in those days the British and French lines joined, I was suddenly aroused to the fact that a fresh action had been started over the ridge beyond Contalmaison from which we had come. A barrage was being put down for an attack or counter-attack, and that was the first time I heard a thing which grew familiar later—the sounds so multitudinous and packed together that they appear to make one sound. What was called the “barrage” of the anti-aircraft guns in and round London in 1918 was not at all like it. That “barrage” at its intensity, was an orderly series of sounds, with regular and distinct intervals between each shot. The music of the shipyard, when the rivetters and caulkers in full strength are hard at work on the sides and keel with their hammers, comes nearer to a true barrage. Still, in that work there are intervals. Between the notes of the real barrage it is not possible to estimate the minute fraction of a second's interval. Virtually, it is all one sound. Considered apart from its effect on the human beings exposed to its ferocity, the barrage,

its music, is not distressing to the ear, at, say, half-a-mile's distance, or even considerably less. The shrill whistle of a boy a few yards off in the street hurts physically; not only gets on the nerve but pains the nerve. Battle music does not ordinarily hurt the ear. Nor does the sound of a shell coming in your direction hurt your ear, though it may be menacing and alarming. No doubt, after a time, the sound of battle, imperceptibly wears men, though they have never suffered the agony of shell shock; even the stoutest hearts will tell you that. Moreover, the untrained ear can be badly caught by being too near a big gun. I learnt that to my cost one day by standing close up to a heavy howitzer at the order "fire," being partly deafened for half an hour after. Yet, the uproar of battle at a little distance is not distressing to the ear as is a boy shrilly whistling, or a pencil drawn with a screech across a slate.

But the numbing, devastating, blind terrorizing effects of the shell storm on the men upon whom it is crashing for perhaps hours at a stretch—who can realise what that must be? Can many, or any, of the men who have endured and come out of it half-alive, themselves render a true account of that "thick-crashing, insane" experience? How is it that the human will has been able in hundreds of thousands of instances to persist through it, to emerge unbroken? Captaine Henry Bordeaux, in his book, "*Les Derniers Jours du Fort de Vaux*," is right—the explanation is to be found in the fact that man is superior to the machine. After the artillery seems to have destroyed everything, the human will still presents a wall of flesh as its effective resistance! And the heart of poor little, feeble man, after all that can be done to break it by guns, tanks, gasses, aeroplanes, and the whole infernal machinery, remains the greatest of military forces. It was a war of machinery we were told, and told ourselves over and over again—and some critics of the British were caustic about "cavalry leaders" directing it!—nevertheless, man was too much for the machine.

.

Many people have turned to "spiritualism" as a consolation against the war, and there are beautiful and wondrous things about "spiritualism." But to me, the will and devotion of millions of fighters through the struggle bring far more evidence in favour of man's immortality than anything which "spiritualism" can offer. The war strikes one as a half inspired book of revelation. I am one of those who, over the question of all questions, cannot say: "I believe," when I harbour doubt. It is easier, it is more venial, to say: "I believe," despite under-doubts and reservations, in regard to some mundane matter. Thus, it would be far easier, and more venial, to say: "I believe the British were irreproachable in regard to the start of the Boer War, or the Crimean War"; or to say: "I believe absolutely in the principles of the Unionist (or of the Liberal) Party," even though one had under-doubts and reservations. But when it comes to the mightiest questions of all, the things that agonisingly matter, the immortality of man, his future life, the mission of Christ, the truth of the Gospel with its Miracles, I shrink from those two bare words. My idea is, and long has been, that it is an offence against the soul to declare them if there is any unexpressed hedging or reservation at the back of the mind. It would be a great thing to be able to say with the noble Montrose:

"Scatter my ashes; strew them in the air;
Lord! since thou know'st where all these atoms
are,
I'm hopeful Thou'lt recover once my dust,
And confident Thou'lt raise me with the just!"

For Montrose never hedged.

Yet, when one thinks over the deeds of tens of thousands of men in the war—of their devotion in giving their lives and limbs, and often of their voluntary self-sacrifice to save others—it is hard to doubt that some men, at least, are immortal, have a divine spark in them not to be quenched. Ordinary life peace may offer evidence of the same nature. But, where peace gives us one



instance from time to time, war gives us a wealth of them. War seems to be as prodigal of them, almost to squander them, as nature the seeds of the plants, flinging these carelessly to every summer breeze. Some people honestly find more difficulty over "I believe" in times of war than in peace. They ask half hopelessly : "Who can believe in a God and in the divinity of man, in the midst of this insane, brutal abomination, this carnage of innocent, this common murder and devilry?" But there are others who find "I believe" nearer their lips then than at any other time ; and I am of the latter. How *can* all this heroic life and spiritual beauty be quenched utterly by death? There is nothing in the nature of it among any other living creatures except men. The dog is next highest ; at its best, the dog's devotion and character are beautiful—but what spheres away from the record of men in war !

Spiritual in any case—though you give up that tremendous problem of immortality and the next world—men in war clearly are. During and after battle that is obvious. I saw a German prisoner, suffering from some ghastly wound, on the road to Albert. He had been taken, I think, in the fight at Courcelette or at Martinpuich, and was on his way to a casualty station. His face was the wannest I ever saw. It was as if nature had forgot the corpuscles in the making of him. He was supported along the road towards the station by two British soldiers, and they held him as if they loved him—which I doubt not they did. Now, that scene was steeped in the spirituality of war. It went into, and searched through and through one.

It happened I saw no dead man on the Somme or elsewhere during that first experience of war ; only prisoners, and meek, chastened wounded, and jovial, "grousing" singing, laughing, cursing, smoking, sweating men, brimful of animal spirits and in the pink of health. In a dug-out I thought I had stumbled over a dead man covered with a wrap, for, when I started and flashed my electric torch down on the figure, it never stirred ; but his officer told me that the man was only

sleeping after a double shift of work among the wounded—sleeping as if there were no hereafter! The morbid uneasiness at seeing the dead passes speedily. This is so, even if the dead are very new. Nor do they always engage the awed and instant notice that might be presumed. Walking along the road in Picardy one morning with two other men, I suddenly remembered we had left our motor behind us, and, if we were going down into the village, we might not desire to return along the same road. So I suggested that, to save an unnecessary walk, we should go back and get the motor and drive instead. They agreed, and we turned back. We had gone twenty or thirty yards when there was a mighty big sound at our backs. We turned about, and saw the ugly smoke rising from a big shell that seemed to have plumped right down in the road about a hundred and fifty yards off. We resumed our quest of the motor. But, after a few yards, one of my companions said he would like to go and see where the shell had fallen. I went back with him—as there was no reason to suppose a second shell was likely to plump down in the same spot. When we reached the spot, we found quite a deep little pit on one side of the hard road, and round it on the other side a lorry was already edging. I was struck by the neatness, the sharp definition, of the shell-hole, and looked and walked half round it, noticing the odd way in which a little ridge of gravel had been tipped over the edge as with a spade. I was turning to go back to the motor when I noticed a figure lying at the lip of the hole; I had quite overlooked that, though it was broad daylight and clear weather. The figure was lying face up. It stared senseless to the sky. Not only that, but by a wicked lie the slaughterer had contrived to suggest that sense never could have been on the countenance. The body might be described as whole. The limbs and head were on, the clothes had not been much disarranged except for one boot wrenched off. Yet, so completely had the gun done its work, that the result was a carcass which left on one no real impression of humanity. Instead of being still warm—five

minutes had scarcely elapsed since the explosion—the body might have been a petrified mummy, thousands of years old, and hidden in wraps, for all the impression of humanity it made on one, for all the pity it called forth. The gun had not only slain senselessly this solitary soldier, who by blind chance happened to be passing its probably random goal : but, adding outrage to outrage, it had slain his due of pity ; for who can summon up pity for an empty case dissociate from and unreminiscent of humanity ? The dead can be beautiful, sacred, infinitely pathetic. But here lay that which by some peculiar malignity had been stripped, I cannot effect to explain how, of all that demands from us pity and sorrow, man's fellow-feeling for man ; a thing of complete insignificance, asking neither for wrath nor our grief ; an empty shell . . . nothing.

The old dead on battlefields can present the same phenomenon as that murdered man. But in their case time is the agent which robs the dead of their due from strangers. I have seen a figure in detached portions, bone and clothing, on the wires in No Man's Land. Nothing remained but a few rags of clothing fluttering in the breeze and attached to the barbs, with underneath some white bones. No burial needed ; no identification possible, for the weather had washed all colour from the bits of clothing, so that one could not tell whether the soldier had been British or German :

“ Many a one for him makes mane,
But nane sall ken where he is gane.
O'er his white banes, when they are bare,
The wind sall blow for ever mair.”

The sight was bizarre rather than painful. Does this to any reader seem callous ? If so, I would ask him : “ Are you pained at the sight of a mummy or the warrior's bones and hair or his ashes, excavated from one of the ancient barrows on the English downs ? A companion said to me half in play, half in protest, one day in France, as we were coming past Bapaume : “ I had imagined you, Dewar, to be a spiritual, cultivated

sort of fellow, yet I find you quite a bloodthirsty person—apparently not shocked by all these horrors of war ! ” I thought his reasoning fallacious. His major and minor premisses were something like this :

“ War is a horrible, barbarous carnage, shocking to any mind of refinement.”

“ You are interested in seeing this thing and do not turn away, as much as I should like to see you do, from these sights.”

“ Therefore, you are a bloodthirsty sort of person, not horrified by war.”

The major premiss I assent to ; the barbarous carnage of war is inexpressibly shocking to a sound mind let alone a refined one.* But his syllogism was wrong. It would have ploughed him in Oxford pass mods, had the rest of his papers been irreproachable.

Moreover, surely it argues materialism, pessimism, in a man to be over-much shocked by the sight of the dead on a battlefield or in a hospital ? In his more exalted, hopeful, believing moods, a man may see therein only clay, the mortal part of humanity. How is it that the sight of a slaughtered dog or horse pains us so keenly at times ? I saw a dead dog cast carelessly at the side of the road once between Amiens and Albert, a year and a half ago, and still remember it somewhat distinctly. One reason I suggest is this : few of us can even half-believe with the Rev. J. G. Wood—though we would like to—that the dog or the horse has another and fairer world to live in. That makes a difference. Once I used to make light of vegetarianism. But I shall not make light of it again, and am ashamed I did so in thoughtlessness. Watch a truckload of bullocks, packed foully close together, going to be slaughtered, or a flock of bleating sheep ; that is enough, if not to set you on thinking, at least to mitigate your scorn for the doctrine of the vegetarian. The last has not been heard of

* And so is the barbarous carnage of men's souls and minds and hearts in the welter of modern commercialism and so-called survival of the fittest ; a terrible truth comfortably overlooked by many statesmen and others.

vegetarianism. The bullocks and the slaughter-yard may not yet convince, but they can shake us.

A word as to dogs in the war zone : they seem to have been, among a large number of men, British, French German, Italian, indispensable. I do not mean indispensable for useful, sentry work, etc., but as companions and friends. I have seen them on three fronts, and they were probably on every front. At Gouzeaucourt, I saw a group of released French civilians from Marcoing and other villages who had sought the British lines and the British soup when the enemy decamped in haste. One of the women had a white and black dog on a string, and it went, wagging its tail vigorously, with her to Péronne in a lorry. The dog was in capital condition, and had shared with her, I dare say, many a scant ration for three years past. It was a jolly sight, those women and children and old men, radiant with joy as they moved out of the ruined station, and were sent off in lorries ; and that dog on the careful string completed it. If that is sentimentalism, give it me in abundance.

CHAPTER VIII

WITH THE FRENCH: VAUX AND VERDUN

"It is insanity," said my companion, a French officer, answering my thoughts as we stood on the plateau near Fort Vaux, and looked at the monstrous scene all round us; "pure insanity; but of course we must go on till the Germans give way." We had started from Verdun in the pitch dark, without lights on our motor, and crawled up the road towards Vaux, between four and five on that icy January morning. Then we had alighted, and, leaving the motor on the road, walked to the fort, and seen its grim interior.

Insanity, raving insanity, is the conclusion which no intelligent man unless wholly used to the scene, blazé to it, hardened against reflection and grown quite incurious over the effects of war, could have failed to reach in the environment of Vaux two or three years ago. A young French officer, who acted as guide, asked me later at breakfast that morning, whether I thought the destruction by shell fire completer about Vaux or on the battlefields of the Somme? I have referred to this point in the last chapter. These comparisons in desolation were always being discussed by people in the war; Flanders, Verdun, the Somme, Champagne—with Flanders commonly awarded the infernal palm. He had served at both the Somme and Verdun. I thought nature had taken harder punishment about Vaux than in those Somme battlefields I had seen, such as Fricourt, Mametz, and Contalmaison. But the guide believed otherwise. He thought a greater weight of destructive material had been put on the Somme, both

in British and French spheres of action, that the destruction was more devastating there. Another French officer in the party held my view. True, in buildings, the Somme was worse. Villages there had been deleted, they had been ground to powder ; whereas the villages about Verdun, and such isolated buildings as lay in the insane wilderness of Vaux, had not, I think, been more than pounded to pieces. I saw substantial, upstanding bits of wall on our way to and from Vaux, and as morning came, and we left the place, and took to the motor road again, and to civilisation and coffee at Verdun, I saw that lovely little spright of a bird, dressed in yellow and black, named oxeye, foraging for insect life in the burst masonry of a roofless cottage, which still boasted three upstanding walls. Where could you find three such good walls in 1917 on the battlefields of the Somme ?

But as to nature, it did strike me she had taken severer punishment on this plateau of Vaux than in the Somme woods. The plateau was clad, before the battle, by large woods. I thought I understood something about woods, after being brought up in the heart of a great one, and knowing the various trees and shrubs and underwoods : oak and ash, maple, wild cherry tree or gean, whitebeam, dogwood, the firs and thorns. Thus, when I walked through the woods of the Argonne I recognised some of the familiar trees and underwoods of my own down country of southern England. But I was humbled in woodcraft on the Vaux plateau ; for when I asked whether a fire had not swept through these fir woods and licked them up ? I was told they had not been fir woods, and there had been no forest fire. They had not been burnt, they had been shelled out, and the barked stumps of the trees I was looking on were stumps of oak and other deciduous trees.

The great Fort Vaux—in those days, January, 1917—had to be approached and entered in the dark, and quitted before daylight, for there was no cover, the enemy was very near, he watched with his machine-guns and rifles ; and there were the H.E. and shrapnel batteries within

range, to be called up by telephone. The telephone might dispute with high explosive the reputation of being chief murderer in the war. Was not the telephone the ears, was it not the eyes and the brain-centre of the guns? The telephone did not actually perform the blasting to bits and wiping clean out; but the telephone was one of the principal agents by which that was done. Would not killing on a great scale prove intolerably slow where armies run to millions, except for the telephone, which tells us when to do it, and with an exquisite nicety corrects our aim when we bungle?

The Germans, then, being so near, Vaux had to be visited in the dark; and after seeing it, one had to leave before light. The compensation for getting up at four in the morning and slipping and plunging an hour in snow and ice and piercing cold was a scene on this Vaux plateau phantasmal as any Dante visualised for his *Inferno*. I saw miles upon miles of once noble woods blasted and smashed into fragments and ghastly stumps, and I saw not one solitary whole or half-whole tree in all that wilderness. Imagine the ground in whatever direction you turned, once you were on that plateau, pocked with jagged pits here and round basins there, hundreds of thousands of them. And then fill in with the wreckage of battle—carts, corpses, horses, strewn wire, and the rest of it. The decent snow, when I was there, shrouded most of this wreckage, and the merciful frost and east wind, with its icy tang,* spared one the sickening scents of old battles. Yet, even so, there were terrible things sticking up indignantly to the sky and glued to the earth. Here was the head and neck of a horse, its mouth wide, a sprinkling of snow on its thin mane, whilst, if one looked curiously into the litter, it was impossible for long to miss seeing the limb or head or trunk of a still unburied soldier. As dawn came, the

* During that week in France, in January-February, 1917, I never but once felt warm, and that was when sleeping underground in the Fortress of Verdun. The cold in Paris was excruciating, and fires were out of the question, as there was scarcely any fuel. But the coldest drive I ever had was with a friend across the Somme. We were travelling very fast, and the wind lifted our rug and blew right through us. It turned us blue. The thing was Arctic. My friend bore it patiently, and tried to shield me. I resorted to brandy.

carriion crows aroused themselves to their pleasures. I saw one or two of them the day before flitting over No Man's Land in the Champagne, but I suspect there had been a migration of them from the ground of the 1915 to that of the 1916 offensive. France during the war was full of friendly, glossy rooks, clean feeders, following the ploughs in the fields or the transport waggons in the roads. But the crow was another story, He smelt the battle from afar ; and his hoarse call went up often from the stumps of trees in the desolation around Vaux.

The trees of Vaux were cut in two and smashed down into jagged stumps, but where was their missing wood ? Here was the Somme mystery again. I suggested it might be lying in splinters under the snow and ice ; but this was not so. The vast bulk of the wood had disappeared. It had been pulverised, just as the masonry of the ex-villages of the Somme had been pulverised. It had simply gone, there was an end of it. Unnumbered human beings clean disappeared in intense shell fire, so likewise, I suppose, the green wood and the dry.

The woods and plateau of Vaux have been driven mad, raving mad, and scarcely can generations of peace restore them to the sweet sanity of nature. They presented nakedly in the rigour of that winter night the most frightful phantasmagory of devildom.

And yet we have this paradox—the field of Vaux is the field of an imperishable French glory. Of all the deeds of France, from the reign of Charlemagne, through the Napoleonic era, till to-day, Vaux perhaps stands first in élan and in might. Through the late winter of 1916, through the spring, summer, and far into the autumn, France withstood the tremendous onslaught of Germany. The enemy forced her out of Douaumont. Vaux still held on. At length, Vaux became utterly isolated, unable to correspond even with its neighbour, Fort Souville—and the Germans blasted their way in.

Briefly, the story of Fort Vaux is this. It was built of masonry in 1880, and reconstructed in concrete

five years after as a protection against the torpedo-shaped shell. Finally, the concrete was reinforced, and the work was finished some three years before the war. It is a vast, formless-looking hump, with numbers of caves and long tunnels beneath deep into the soil. With Fort Douaumont—its still larger neighbour, and furnished with more casemates, cupolas, barracks and strongholds generally—Vaux protected Verdun on the east of the Meuse, and served to shelter the two older forts, Tavannes and Souville, lying between itself and that town. Vaux and Douaumont had both to be stormed before Tavannes and Souville could be reduced and Verdun entered. In February, 1916, the storm suddenly fell on Douaumont and Vaux, and the hurricanes of 150 mm., 210 mm., and 380 mm. shells descended on both. Douaumont seems to have been surprised and taken by the Germans on February 25th 1916. Early in March the Germans announced officially that they had stormed Fort Vaux also. But the news was false, and they were compelled to cover it up a few days later by a grudging admission that the French had counter-attacked and got back into the fort. Actually, Vaux held out with marvellous heroism for more than three months after Douaumont had fallen, though it was at the close completely isolated, was without water, and had been attacked with ever-growing force and fury by the Germans. Thousands of shells almost every day were hurled on it. It did not go down till June 7th, 1916, and the last phases were the most heroic, for the enemy then had established himself upon the outside of the fort. The final passages were not ungenerously described by the *Breisgauer Zeitung* about the middle of June, 1916. I have never seen a French account.

So France, forced out of this tremendously important defence, dropped on one knee, and fought so for a while. Then she rose, hurled herself on the enemy drove him from Vaux, and re-held all that chain of earth fortresses which secure the symbol named Verdun. When the historian hereafter visits the ruins of Verdun, he will

go up among the haunted woods of Vaux, and recognise that it was here France saved herself and the civilised world.

Vaux and the road up to Vaux across that ghastly ice-bound plateau formed together the most grotesque scene in my own experience of French, British or Italian fronts, though they were then, as regards fighting, quite quiet. Virtually, warfare seems to have ended around Vaux and Douaumont when, two or three months before I was there, the French attacked, and won back both forts. A French seventy-five thundered once or twice from Fort Vaux as we left it just before dawn, whilst, occasionally during the night, the sky had blazed for a few seconds from a shot here and there along the Meuse heights, then relapsed into its heavy winter grey-black. But the mighty grapple of giants at Verdun was over in 1916, and never really renewed. It may be said there was a kind of second Somme, and even a third—though these were retreats rather than clean-cut battles like that 1916 Somme, in which the casualties, British, French and German, could not have been far short of two million. There was never a second Verdun—nothing to dim its lustre.

As Vaux on that sinister morning before light was the most grotesque scene I witnessed during the war, Verdun, on the evening before, was the most beautiful. We came into it soon after dark, having spent the last hour of light in examining the fort on the west bank of the Meuse, named Bois Bourras, one of the latest and strongest of the cluster around the town. The moon was up, and at the full when we entered Verdun, and the ground and ruined houses were powdered with sparkling snow. So light was it through this union of snow and moon that one could easily have read bold print out of doors. A French artist who was with us was able, in the moonlight, to make some sketches of the town. I have often seen scenes of elfin loveliness like that in English winter woods and on frozen commons; but the heroic record of Verdun, added, made this French spectacle matchless. I was often struck, recalling them

later, by the extraordinary contrast between the mild beauty of Verdun in the godlike night and the ferocious brutality of Vaux plateau and woods, with its monstrous hump of a fort, in the devilish morning.

I dined and slept in Fort Verdun that night. Next day—after Fort Vaux at four in the morning—I saw something of the Meuse and Fort Troyon, which played its part during the first few months of the war; and returned to Paris through Clermont in Argonne and Chalons. That was the last I saw of the French in the war—except their cavalry at Péronne one day moving up behind the British lines during the battle of Cambrai.

From the little I saw of the French in their lines, and from the much I have imagined about them—and I believe imagination is more essential than information, even authentic information, to an understanding of the war—I conclude they were a superb army; professional to the finger-tips. Their machine was probably equal to the German machine, except in weight. I doubt the legend that the French were great in attack but of no great account in defence: Verdun discounts that popular story. The professionalism of the French army particularly struck me during a day I spent going over the “Hand of Massiges,” with its bloody “five fingers,” which cost the French such a high price when they rushed it against the German machine-gunners in September, 1915. Equally, the professionalism of the French Army appealed to me during another day I spent in the Argonne Forest at a part of the line which the Americans stormed and carried in the last weeks of the war.

It was sound policy, in the last phase, to place the British, with the Americans, under a Generalissimo, and that Generalissimo a Frenchman. I admit I came rather slowly, angrily, to that conclusion. Should one be ashamed altogether of national pride? Seeing what an immense value is attached to the principle of nationality to-day, and how it has largely ruled our policy during the war, national pride in a matter such as this is excusable. Moreover, it was not only sound policy

for the Allies to have one supreme command—chivalry demanded that the leader himself should be a French general. France was the invaded country. France had made, considering her population, the most costly sacrifices of her manhood. She had long held the greater part by far of the Allied Line. She had suffered ravages on her own soil from which we entirely escaped, thanks to our position and Navy. Finally, France offered us in the person of Marshal Foch a fine soldier and a gentleman.

So the right thing was done, from the standpoint of utility as from the standpoint of chivalry. It worked well: the relations of Foch and Haig were, I believe, flawless. But when I am asked to believe that, had this arrangement existed when the Germans swept through Belgium in 1914, and sat down at the Aisne after the Battle of the Marne, we should have won the war in 1915 or early in 1916, I decline. Likewise, I decline to believe when advised that the Battle of the Somme could have been won in six days—or in sixty days—if we had fought with our minds in 1916, instead of pounding away at impenetrable lines with our guns. There may, or may not, be some information at the back of such theories. But where they are so at fault is in their dearth of imagination: those who believe in them have never imagined the gigantic strength and precision of the German machine: never imagined the ability of the German leadership, which, though it lacked anything like Napoleonic genius and originality, was rich in talent, fertile in cunning, remorseless resources: never imagined the long, close effort which we required here at the base to manufacture the vast weight and variety of material without which a super-Napoleon could not have crushed the German armies.

As to this last matter—munitions—we do owe a great debt to one man. I could not see it at the time, but it is clear to me now that when Lloyd George started out to the North in June, 1915, he did the great, original thing of the war. That was an act of prescience. We might ultimately have come victorious out of the war

without a great energising move like that ; or somebody else, failing him, might have thought it and done it. Even with France overrun, and our own armies forced to withdraw in 1916 or 1917, we might have persisted in the war, and have come to a conclusion by our Fleet some time in the nineteen hundred and twenties. We might have prevailed somehow, and come out safely in the long, long run. Nevertheless, that rush of originality in an impatient man which led to the Ministry of Munitions was an immense boon to us. It is dense ignorance to talk of any man having "won the war." But there appear to have been three essential figures on the British side, Douglas Haig : Lloyd George, and Northcliffe. Ceaseless vigour, always to be up and acting, is what was chiefly needed : and they set the pace in that quality.

We were lucky to have won the war ; for we monstrously muddled most things in 1914 and 1915. Our haphazard way of recruiting men by sham voluntaryism cost us heavily in munitions, and cost us tens of thousands of lives. Our statesmanship on the whole was not heroic.

CHAPTER IX

THE HEROIC BATTLE OF CAMBRAI

ONE evening last autumn I was dining next to a smart and well-educated sergeant in the R.A.M.C., in a crowded little foreign London restaurant. Two waiters, with the manager and his wife, all foreigners, were contriving somehow to run the whole service, attending, as by inspiration, to thirty or forty people. The sergeant and myself, sitting close to the bar, marvelled at the way the thing was done, and agreed that only foreigners, French, Italian or Swiss, could have carried on against such difficulties. We began to discuss catering in Italian and French restaurants, and turned from that to the war. The sergeant had been through Belgium with the Expeditionary Force, had served at Mons and Ypres, where he was wounded and invalided home. He spoke about our heavy losses in these early phases of the war, when we were hopelessly out-gunned, though the casualty lists were nothing compared with later ones.

"There was Cambrai last March," he said, "where we lost, how many, do you think, when the Germans attacked at Gouzeaucourt?—Ninety thousand men!"

I suggested that the battle was in November-December of 1917, not in March, 1918. He considered for a few moments, then insisted, no, it was last March; and added some other remarks about certain divisions, which proved to me it *was* the Battle of Cambrai, 1917, he was thinking of, not the German offensive of last year, though the two had mixed up in his mind.

There is a great deal of confusion of that kind over

the plain, known facts of the war ; what is clear and true in detail about the position and work of particular brigades and battalions being often entangled with wild figures and hearsay. The Battle of Cambrai, November-December, 1917, is an illustration in point. Many people are confident it was a British defeat, others hold it was a decided British victory, even after the close of the German counter-attack and our withdrawal ; whilst great numbers have forgotten almost everything about it, except that an officer, on the morning of the 30th of November when the enemy broke through and got into Gouzeaucourt, had to leap from his tub and with a bath towel round his loins, escape from the village. That officer is innocently responsible for much of the twaddle as to the battle of Cambrai ; he has put everything out of perspective for tens of thousands of people. He did exist however ; and, when the enemy walked suddenly into the village, he had to decamp with many another good man, to avoid being put into a prisoner's cage.

Actually, at the close of the Battle of Cambrai, in prisoners and guns, there was nothing much to choose between the two sides. Nor was there much as regards ground ; the enemy had pushed us back from our position on November 19th on the south side of the battle front ; whilst we, withdrawing from Bourlon Wood on the north and from Marcoing and Masnières on the Canal de L'Escaut, occupied, at the close, some thousands of yards of the main Hindenburg Line along the Flesquières ridge. The Battle of Cambrai thus closed ; there was no more fighting on that front until, on March 21st, 1918, the Germans started their final offensive.

So far then as prisoners, guns and ground were concerned, the Battle of Cambrai must be described as indecisive or drawn. It has sometimes been likened to a big raid. It was not that, either in its inception or result. A raid is undertaken to secure prisoners, and ascertain the plans and strength of the enemy at certain points ; or to destroy aggravating machine-gun positions, etc. And after a raid, the men commonly

return to the trenches they started from. We did not return, except on the south, where, through superior numbers and a successful counter-attack, we were compelled to do so ; we took up on the north, as I have said, after it was all over, some thousands of yards of new front right in the Hindenburg main line, and stayed there till March 21st, 1918. But, though an utterly different thing from a raid, the British thrust on November 20th, 1917, was never intended as a preliminary to the destruction of the German armies, and a triumphant march to Berlin or the Rhine. "What was its object then, its real genesis?" I have heard people ask. "What was the good of it, if it was not in the nature of a big raid, and if there was no imposing, strategical design behind it?"

The answer surely is simple and convincing. Suppose you can secretly prepare and launch at the enemy a sudden swinging blow, which bursts his front and support lines at a spot where he believes himself secure, drive him miles back, isolate by a daring cavalry rush an important city which will send a sensational and political thrill through the world, kill a large number of his men, and scupper two or three whole divisions and a substantial number of field pieces and heavy guns, will not the result, though it go no further, and was not meant to go further, be a great stroke of war?

Now, roughly, that, I take it, was the maximum we promised ourselves by the Battle of Cambrai. We did not achieve it. I was all through the Battle of Cambrai, British offensive and German counter-offensive—so far as a non-combatant can be described as being through a battle or offensive—and I was convinced that the plan was justifiable, and the British Army—for various reasons—right to try it. During the reaction, which followed our withdrawal from Bourslon Wood to Flesquières ridge and from Marcoing and Masnières, I remained convinced. I am to-day.

The Third Army proved right up to the hilt by the operations of November 20th and 21st, this: the story among the pessimists at home about the Hinden-

burg line being "impenetrable" was wrong. By penetrating that line at an immensely strong point, and coming out virtually on the other side of it,* the Third Army ended for good and all the story about impenetrability. It was, I suggest, a costly story; but, in ending it, the Army did a necessary stroke, for the repetition of the word "impenetrability" was chilling people to the bone in England, and was doing no good in France. There was a dangerous idea stealing over many people that we had shot our bolt in France; and by November, 1917, they were more than half persuaded that the British Army could not, under Douglas Haig, do much more. I heard this suggested more than once after Passchendaele, when people were at the heyday of their moaning about "those terrible Flanders casualties." There was death to the Allied cause in that creeping, paralytic idea. Cambrai stopped the disease.

When I went over to France, a few days before Cambrai started, I was told: "There will be nothing much more now this winter, but possibly a small rounding up operation at Lens." Nevertheless, I had an obstinate notion by mid-November that there *would* be something more.

Had we sat still through the autumn and winter of 1917-18, we should have gone rotten—as we should have gone rotten had we sat still through 1915. The great gain of Cambrai was that we were up and doing and daring, smashing the deadly and costly story of impenetrability, and the German lines.

Two frequent arraignments of the Cambrai stroke are: (1) "It cost us many lives, for which we got no sufficient recompense—since even defenders of the stroke admit we had not much ground to show to our credit after the withdrawal in December, and had lost by the counter-offensive virtually as many prisoners and guns

* We had riddled the two strongest wired lines, namely, Hindenburg and Hindenburg Support, and at several points went through the whole series of four lines, including the La Vacquerie system of outposts, by November 21.

as we won by the offensive." (2) "In any case, we had not enough men for such an ambitious adventure."

As to the first arraignment, Cambrai did cost us many brave men, glorious young lives.

But that is war.

The greatest argument against war, the greatest condemnation of war, is that it costs us glorious young lives.

There are people who talk and write amusingly about war, as if it can be all so scientifically arranged beforehand on paper that "unnecessary" casualties need never occur; in fact, that we ought to have thought the Germans out of their lines on the Aisne and the Somme, etc.—and, presumably, that the Germans ought to have thought the French out of Verdun. It is suggested that intellect in war will never have "unnecessary" casualties, will supersede carnage by scientific thought. I once heard Sir William Harcourt express a playful fear lest Lord Kitchener had conducted his successful campaign in North Africa so economically that he might make war almost popular. That economy, however, related to coin, not casualty. There is no danger of genius ever making war popular through keeping down the expense of life. Napoleon and Wellington had genius. They hammered out their plans beforehand. Yet, to glance through Napoleon's successful campaigns is to recognise that "unnecessary" casualties were frequent and huge. Turn to Wellington's masterly campaign in the Peninsula; did it not include more than one hard-won battle which resulted in no immediate benefit to us despite our lavish expenditure of life? Albuera itself, with its horrible slaughter, produced no immediate military result for us. Then there was Frederick the Great; at the close of his Silesian campaigns, one man out of every nine in Prussia was missing.

The loss of life at Cambrai was grievous. That is a condemnation of war. But it is not a condemnation of the Cambrai plan; except in so far as the greater includes the less.

THE HEROIC BATTLE OF CAMBRAI 187

The second arraignment—that we had not enough men available, owing to our heavy consignments to the Italian front, etc., is stronger. I came to the conclusion, before the first week of the battle was ended, that we wanted many more men for our work in France ; but, though I tried hard to state this in print, I was not allowed to do so. Authority would not allow me. But I was able—as an indifferent second best—to get into print before the battle was quite over, a statement that with the material available, the British Army had done well at Cambrai : “ The British force, with the material at its disposal, has done great things by the well-prepared and suddenly administered stroke of the Third Army.” December 5th, 1917, War Correspondents’ Headquarters, France. That was absolutely true.

More men—that was our aching want at Cambrai, before Cambrai, after Cambrai ! (The munitions were all right. Thanks to the working classes at home, those goods were delivered.) Coming over on the boat from France on one occasion, I travelled with a member of the War Cabinet, and ventured to say this to him. He mused, as if thinking aloud : “ The man power question is becoming pressing ” ; but added, “ unfortunately when we do find more men, they are lost.” Passchendaele and the later Flanders fights were in his mind. The casualties were heavy there. But that is war.

When I returned to England I tried hard to ventilate this question ; for I dreaded what might happen in 1918 in case of a great German offensive—and what actually did happen on March 21st, 1918. But I was unsuccessful. Then how I wished I had a paper of my own to press the matter home week after week, even day after day ! I found the terrible delusion prevalent that we had any amount of men but no generalship, no light and leading. One gentleman to whom I mentioned our urgent need replied he could not give me leave to agitate the question—if at any time we really were in want of more men in France, all Haig needed to do was to turn his cavalry into infantry. Fancy ! one little Cavalry Corps.

If our casualties through our offensive had not been heavy in 1916 and 1917, Germany might not be out of the war to-day—though, conceivably, France and Italy would have been out. Great wars mean, have always meant, and—unless the League of Nations abolishes war—will continue to mean, great, “unnecessary” casualties. Notably so, when genius is on the scene, e.g., Frederick the Great or Napoleon.

Had the maximum of our Cambrai plan come off, a splendid success would have been scored. It might have made the German drive of four months later impracticable. As it was, I knew by the end of the second day—November 21st, 1917—that the Cambrai maximum had been missed. The surprise attack had been extraordinarily successful. The tanks—these were over three hundred—were assembled behind our lines without the enemy getting wind of it; field artillery was pushed up overnight almost under his nose, and within easy range of his machine-guns; and at zero, 6.20 a.m., November 20th, the battle started without any preliminary bombardment. Everywhere the enemy was surprised, and some fourteen thousand yards of the main Hindenburg line were speedily in our possession, with large portions of the Hindenburg support line behind it. The 6th, 12th, and 20th Divisions captured, respectively, Ribécourt, Lateau Wood and Welsh Ridge. One Division, the 62nd, after storming Havrincourt village, covered 7,000 yards towards Bourslon Wood on the first day; whilst the 51st—the Highlanders—the 29th, who, with the tanks, seized Masnières and Marcoing, the 36th (Ulster), and 56th (Londoners), all did fine work.

But the maximum demanded that the cavalry, to sweep round both sides of Cambrai and isolate it, must be through before dark on the first day. It was a race against time. Time won.

The cavalry, except for a daring squadron or two, the Fort Garry Horse for instance, did not get across the Canal, in order to sweep round and isolate Cambrai on the east, for Rumilly had not been carried in the

THE HEROIC BATTLE OF CAMBRAI 189

attack, nor had we, by the close of the first day, taken the final enemy line of trenches across the Canal, which was essential to cavalry progress and success on that side. Also, there was a delay of some few hours through the bridge across the Canal at Masnières breaking down with a tank on it ; moreover, we were held up till the morning of the 21st of November at Flesquières, where some tanks were put out of action by an enemy gun. I saw them in a line, in the open two or three hundred yards off, on the afternoon of the 21st—a sight to remember ! The cavalry did dashing, impulsive things at the start of the offensive, galloping several villages, such as Noyelles, and in one or two instances capturing enemy batteries, and cutting down the gunners. But *the* coup, namely to get clean through before dark, sweep round and isolate Cambrai itself on both sides, was not to be. As soon as the enemy began to recover from his surprise, it was all over with that ; for, though the tanks and infantry were through the two Hindenburg main lines, and ultimately got into Bourlon Wood, the Germans were able to strengthen their defences round the city, and make them quite impracticable for horse.

We missed the maximum—but we did not miss it by a great deal ; and there is not the faintest doubt in my mind that it was a clever, daring plan, grandly worth trying. Haig and Byng were perfectly right.

Though the cavalry stroke had not come off, there remained a reasonable prospect of getting Bourlon Wood, with the village behind it, and some other commanding positions to the west of the city, which would have driven the enemy to retreat on that side beyond the Sensee. We persevered, did get possession of the wood, and for a time were fighting in the village, where friend and foe were sandwiched together. The game was not over till the enemy brought up heavy reinforcements, some from the Eastern Front, and on November 30th, attacked fiercely on the north, between Moeuvres and Fontaine, and on the south between Masnières and Villers Guislain. We were than altogether outmatched

in numbers. Nevertheless, his attack between Moeuvres and Fontaine, the heavier one, failed. He made no ground, and his casualties were terrible. It was a slaughter of Germans, comparable with Ypres, Oct.-Nov., 1914, and episodes at Verdun, 1916; wave after wave of his men going down before machine-gun, as well as field artillery and heavies. At the end of that furious German attack on the north, the British occupied the ground they were holding at the first shock in the morning. Their line was intact.

The German thrust met with much the same fate at Masnières and Marcoing, but further south it drove through disastrously. For one thing, our line there was undoubtedly thin or patchy. The enemy penetrated even in Gouzeaucourt, making our whole position in the Cambrai salient very precarious till the Guards, who were hard by, resting after Fontaine, attacked and chased them out. A few days later, we withdrew from Bourlon and the positions round about, to the Flesquières ridge, as we had already withdrawn from Marcoing and Masnières. But the men in those two areas were never beaten. They put up a wall of steel against the enemy, and inflicted on him terrible punishment. We lost ground, and we lost in prisoners and guns, through what is generally known as the Gouzeaucourt surprise attack further south by the enemy. I doubt whether it was rightly termed a surprise. A heavy counter-attack by the enemy had been expected on the whole of the front, from the south of Gouzeaucourt to Moeuvres, for a little time past, and the Corps at the former were uneasy lest its forces might prove—as they did—too frail to withstand a heavy thrust. All that could fairly be termed a surprise was the speed with which the enemy found bad places and walked through. The attack was expected; but the line was, in patches, frail; and the attack drove home.

That incident, accident, or whatever it may be styled, turned the Battle of Cambrai from a British victory into a drawn fight. The fickle fortune of war! But one cannot deny that the enemy pulled himself together

THE HEROIC BATTLE OF CAMBRAI 191

after the staggering blow he had received in the first two or three days of the battle; that he brought up re-inforcements very ably; and that the devotion of his waves of attacking troops in the Bourslon and Moeuvres side of the battle on November 30th was extraordinary. At one point on that field of Aeldama we mowed down, largely at point blank range, eleven successive enemy waves. It was here that an isolated company of the 13th battalion of the Essex Regiment, after keeping off the enemy all day, held a council of war—two officers, sergeant major, platoon sergeants. They decided unanimously to see it out, and despatched two runners to report the news to battalion headquarters. And they saw it out; died to a man with face to enemy. There was stuff of that sort on both sides—surely the very stuff of immortality in man at his highest? On the opening day of the Battle of Cambrai there was a solitary German officer, who, all his men being shot or having gone, served his field gun single-handed, and stopped our tanks by Flesquières till a shot at length ended him.

I am glad to have been a suttler at the heroic Battle of Cambrai, November-December, 1917. But if I were asked: "What did you actually, visually, see of the fighting; of the storming of Fontaine, taken and lost, set on fire, taken and lost again; of the galloping of Cantaign or Noyelles by the horse; of those field-grey waves which between Fontaine and Moeuvres came on hour after hour on November 30th, and hour after hour broke and went down—I must admit, not a great deal! The truth is that only in rare instances can the man just behind the battle clearly see any but even fragments of the struggle through his own eyes. He must see most of it through the information supplied by Divisional or Corps or Brigade Headquarters. He can survey at times the field of battle during the battle. He can see the puzzling movements of the troops behind the fighting forefront; often an aerial duel; of course plenty of the artillery work. I climbed on to the Spoil Heap one

day between Hermies and Havrincourt—the spoil Heap tackled by the Ulster men, I think, on November 21st—and watched our guns, in front and all around me, opening on the enemy positions about Moeuvres—we never actually held Moeuvres—three miles away. The landscape winked to the flashes of our guns, and soon the barrage took the form I have referred to earlier—the sounds so multitudinous and packed together as to make one sound. The smoke was attenuated, hiding nothing from me. The drama of that battle scene, with its groups of puzzling, scattered figures moving nonchalant, as it seemed, hither, thither, deep in their “unknown days employ”; the drama and the wild music of it gripped me tight. The artillery scene was presently varied, just before the gleams of the afternoon sun faded off the landscape, and the light began to give, by lines of shells bursting across Moeuvres with bright splashes of flame—some form of “frightfulness,” the nature of which I have forgotten. Each splash of flame was followed by a thick white cloud, first taking cumulus forms, like those of the English June sky, next spreading into long trails.

After half-an-hour's watching, I had to clamber down the Spoil Heap and motor back to Amiens. The engagement appeared over. But it was only a lull. The guns had started anew before I was out of Hermies, and for miles on my way back through Bapaume I saw in the twilight, darkly silhouetted against the sky-line, wherever some position of vantage offered, such as a ruined building or a mound, groups of soldiers watching that spectacle of wrath.

I went to the Spoil Heap once again before the close of the Battle of Cambrai. It is a huge uncouth mass of chalk, excavated in the making of the Canal du Nord close by, and at its base the Germans had burrowed deeply in. Again in the summer of 1918, it was held and obstinately defended by the enemy when the British were forcing him out of Moeuvres and Havrincourt. From its flat summit there was a fine view of the undulating ground about Moeuvres and Graincourt,

with Marquion to be distinctly seen to the North and the towers of Cambrai a few miles eastward. About four thousand yards off, lay Bourlon Wood, and in the tangle of rank grass about the spot, I put up partridges and one large hare. The place was quite exposed and without cover, but I did not see a shell burst on or near it. The summit appeared to be packed thickly with stale shell holes only ; though to mount it after November 29th, when the enemy made his tremendous counter-attack between Fontaine and Moeuvres, would have been very dangerous. As a fact during the first nine days of the Battle of Cambrai, the back areas, even close up to the fighting, were unaccountably safe ; whereas, directly the counter-attack started, they became dangerous, shells being scattered profusely as in Flanders on roads and villages behind the lines.

I was about to clamber on to the Spoil Heap on one of the safer days when a German aeroplane came overhead quite low, shot at by rifle as well as guns immediately around me, and made for a sausage at Hermies. It fired its machine-gun at the sausage, which broke into flame. One of the observers leapt from the basket. There was a moment of suspense, then his parachute opened. He was clear of the flaming mass, and he was wafted away at an angle of about 65 degrees to the ground. Next, the second observer, freeing himself of the wires in which he had become slightly entangled, followed—barely in time ! His parachute responded, too, and the tiny figures, gnome-like, very softly, very slowly, floated sideways to the earth. A thick volume of pitch-black cloud marked the descent—now straight down—of the sausage. The flame dwindled into a minute spark which went out in a few seconds. Then the long column of pitch was twirled and wreathed into a few thin, fantastic wisps, somewhat like the queer forms taken by a flock of dunlins or starlings during one of their mysterious aerial drills. In a few seconds these, too, were gone. The insubstantial pageant had dissolved, leaving not a rack behind. That was a faëry touch of war.

CHAPTER X

ITALY IN THE WAR

" infinite of years,
And splendid with quenched tears ;
Strong with old strength of great things fallen and fled,
Diviner for her dead."

—SWINBURNE.

IN August, 1917, the Italian Military Attachè in London invited me to visit the war front on the Carso and in the Julian Alps, with leave to go to Milan, Rome and other cities at the base if I choose. I gathered from a sure source that the great Italian offensive against the Austrian Army was soon to begin, so hurried through with the passport and other preliminaries and left for Rome. It was a deeply interesting experience, as I had never looked on the Adriatic, nor seen the Italian Army, except for a glimpse of it in Sicily during the war in Tripoli. The experience began with one mishap, and closed with another on my return journey, between Genoa and Southampton. Yet, I look back on the adventure, despite its start and ending, with pleasure. For one thing, I was in such good company throughout, Italians and British and Americans, everybody trying to do one a good turn, whether at the front or the base, or on the journey out and back. Travelling about Europe during the war, when the regulations became stiffened, and obstacles were thrown in your way, no matter how seemingly persuasive your papers and passports, had its drawbacks : the slowness and overcrowding of the trains, the difficulty over luggage and food, the competition for the few "sleepers" on night journeys. But there were compensations. I found,

wherever I went, a fraternity among travellers, military and civilian alike, which I have not been conscious of during travel abroad—or at home—in peace time. We were all pitying ourselves and each other consumedly, looking up out-of-date time-tables hopelessly on another man's account, or the other man was looking them up hopefully on our account. Then there was the torture of the passport and papers, and the queue at the frontiers, etc. We were all, more or less, fellow sufferers in that, and how we chafed under the tedious formalities, the inane questions as to whether we were carrying letters or gold, why we had come, whither we were going, when we should be returning, what we were going to do when we arrived there! It did not matter that our papers and passports stated the facts, and Governments and Foreign Offices authorised us to proceed with all despatch—the questions were asked all the same. Time had to be wasted somehow; officials, particularly the younger ones, had to prove they were indispensable; and the perfunctory question: "Have you any gold about you?" with the perfunctory reply: "None," proved in some mysterious way that indispensability. To get to Italy and its front and back in 1917, one had to pass through *eleven* creeping barrages of the kind, the opening three of which, British, French, Italian, were laid down in London. I believe, as a fact, I ought to have passed through twelve, but I took a risk and deliberately missed a preliminary police one in Rome, and heard no more about it. The passport torture made us brothers all; our bitter hatred of the officials made us rather love each other.

Often we had no notion of each other's names or businesses, but we travelled together, dined and breakfasted together, as if we were bosom cronies. A neutral and myself travelled as far as Gare de Lyon together. We were joined by a man, who, unlike ourselves, had no long wait at the passport offices. He appeared to enter in a sort of regal manner, with a duchess, a millionaire, or some other dominant personage, through a side door one minute and was out almost the next,



and hurrying through with his luggage. Between Havre and Paris I asked him how he managed it.

"Well, the fact is, Mister," he answered, chuckling at himself, "I'm a kind of diplomatic card."

He seemed to know about submarines. When I asked him what had become of him on the boat the night before, he winked, and said: "What do *you* think? Why, on deck, of course! I know too much to go below at night as you two did. Suppose we had hit anything in the dark, let alone anything hit us, where would you have been, down below—why in the dark perhaps and drown-ded like rats in a hole—what!"

"But," I objected, "that boat has never been touched—she goes too fast."

"Mister, now don't you be too sure. The deck's the safest place."

And he went on to tell us that he had sauntered round and looked up the places where the life-belts and rafts were stowed away. Two or three women had remained on deck also: the neutral and I knew that to our cost, for they were just over us, and never ceased talking the livelong night.

We were in the train between Havre and Paris when our friend was telling us of "the safest place." Suddenly the train gave a great jolt, and some Frenchwomen screamed out, and we were half jerked out of our seats.

"Hello!" exclaimed the diplomatic card hilariously, "what, another submarine!"

Whereat the women and everybody burst into laughter.

I think I am safe in saying that man's job was travelling hither and thither doctoring the invalids lying with large holes in their sides in dry docks—no ordinary practitioner, however, but a consulting physician. I never saw his papers, but the neutral did, and he told me it was no wonder our friend passed in a regal manner with a few persons who looked like duchesses and Crowned Heads through important doors. Yet, as the truly great have been in war services, he was so modest. He asked if he might go to the hotel in Paris with us—as he did not know how to say *oui* or *avez-vous*,

whereas the neutral spoke French as well as he spoke his native tongue ; nor would he sit down to dine with our humble selves till he had shaved a beard of some day's growth and changed his clothes. We thought he had left us for good when suddenly he reappeared and joined us.

" Ah, look at him ! " exclaimed the neutral, " doesn't he look beautiful ? " Imagine strangers, at any other time but one of war, talking to one another in this spirit on the strength of a two days' acquaintance !

Coming out of the station at St. Lazarre, I hurt my back through trying to carry two heavy bags in the absence of a porter. The pain at length became intolerable, and my two companions had to see me to bed before they left, one for Switzerland, the other for Toulon. But before they went they saw to everything, ordered my room, tried to get me medicines, offered to plaster me up generally, and told Cook's representative to pay me visits, and to see I had a sleeper in case I could stir next night.

It looked as if I were in for a week of bed—and the Italian offensive might start in less than a week ! I took to aspirin. How many grains I consumed that and next day I am afraid to say, but I kept on taking more ; and next night I managed to get up and be put into my sleeper. After that I took to aspirin again, and by the time we reached Rome, I got up and walked, and am not sure I could not have carried my bed with me. There is nothing like cold tar for a rick in the back, or for an attack of lumbago. But for that, and the aid of the submarine physician and the neutral, I should probably have missed the opening of the Italian offensive. As it was, I was able to spend several days restfully at Rome, and get free altogether of pain before turning North to Udine, the Italian General Headquarters.

I entered Italy by the Mt. Cenis, expecting to find the country scorched up by the sun, for the heat was great after we crossed the Alps. Yet, the foliage was so green and fresh, it might have been early June in England. When August shows English hedges and woods, even

down by the brookside, wilted and dulled, the Italian August shows verdant trees, fields and gardens as if still at the heyday of summer. This was so even during the fierce afternoon ; whilst, as twilight came on, and we passed from Genoa along the wonderful line to Spezzia, the sense of freshness, as the earth and air cooled, was still more marked. The Italians were at the wide open windows or on the balconies, and, as the train passed, they cheered the soldiers, British as well as their own. A martial scene at the base so beautiful as that I saw in no country during the war. The unravished green of the trees, with glimpses between them here and there of the deep blue Mediterranean, the ardent heart of the watchers in the little towns and villages on the hills or nestled at the edge of the sea, are unforgettable. Italy had dark hours in the war, no country in the Entente group had much darker. She had her faltering sects, her despondents. The iron was in her soul. But one did feel, entering Italy in such an environment, that there was the land of Mazzini, of a belief in liberty in its pure, poetic form. The gross materialism of the war was remote from that scene. One was not beset there by the uneasy suspicion of a spirit of profiteering, self-seeking commercialism, lurking with a grin sometimes behind displays of war fervour. Like other countries, Italy, no doubt had that disagreeable side. She may have had, too, her over-claims and extravagant counsellors, as well as her calculating moderators, who were for a detached attitude towards the struggle—the *parrechio* band. But on the whole, Italy's attitude through the war was quite as satisfying morally as that of any old European nation in the struggle. I knew when I went to Italy in 1917—through the leading spirits in both camps, Slavs and Italians, some of whom were and are personal friends—about the claims and counter claims as regards portions of Istria and the Dalmatian Coast ;* but I do not for a moment assent

* Strategical considerations favour Italy's claim. Early culture unquestionable favours it too. What is much of Dalmatia but old Venice, which was once " the safeguard of the West " ? But ethnography, nationality, to-day

to the statement that Italy's line has been a more materialistic or carnal one than Great Britain's, or France's or America's. Italy came into the war when the Entente was very hard pressed indeed, and when it was questionable whether the Entente would win. She fought the best divisions of the Austrian Army for three years and more—fully a million Austrian soldiers. She rejected tempting German offers before her entry on our side. Had it not been for Italian intervention, Russia might have been out of the war in 1916, and the Austrian Army—which only green-horns belittled—would then have been used with perhaps decisive effect against British and French, in the East and the West, before America could come in. Great Britain, France, Belgium and Serbia are all under a debt to Italy; so is the United States; people forgetting that, forget not only generosity, they forget honour.

So much for Italy's intervention, morally. She would come as secure as any nation out of an ordeal in that. But how satisfying was Italy's intervention, from the poetic, the aesthetic, standpoint, too! I realised that at her base and at her front as I never had before. Italy has been an illuminated missal among modern European nations. One felt that in peace-time; and it was all as perceptible in war.

But, though Italy is rich in this romantic, aesthetic side, though her main business among the nations of the earth has often appeared to be that of beauty, I soon found at the base, first at Rome and finally at Genoa, that she had also a full masculine vigour in war time. The energy of Rome was astonishing, though the sun heat was almost overpowering to a northerner, and for two days or so out of the week I was there I found something much less bearable, a sort of choking closeness, which even the Italians complained of. Now, in the downpour of that sun heat, and that choking closeness which prevailed for forty-eight hours, one might have expected

usually support Slav claims; and we have fought the war considerably on the nationality principle. I have always hoped Italy would settle generously with the Slavs. She can afford to play a noble part in the time of her triumph.

the Italians to rest, or at most to play at doing something like the aristocratic Arabs of North Africa. On the contrary, Rome buzzed with energy in August, brimmed with life. The Italian in August was nearer my notion of a hustler than a lotus-eater. He knocked off work at mid-day for two or three hours, it is true, shut his office, and indulged, I suppose, in *dolce far niente*. I lay down in misery during those terrible hours in the oven each day. Then I got up and wandered from room to room in the hotel, out into the garden and courtyards and back again, longing to reach some cool spot; unable to do or think anything. And yet the Italians were then back in their offices, piling on the work with renewed energy, alert, vital, high-spirited. Later, they were enjoying themselves after the day's work whilst I was tossing about on my bed vainly trying to sleep. They had been up and hard at work a good hour or two next morning, when I was sitting down to my *complet* with—in the absence of butter—British raspberry jam at nine o'clock.

Italy is poor, materially. She has no coal, little enough wood. Her financial position during the war could hardly be described as sound, the lira having sunk almost as badly as the mark. Much of her soil is barren or difficult, though where the bad, old system of *latifondo* (land in great estates, with absenteeism) gives place to small ownership and loving peasant toil, crops are wrung out of rocks—in, for instance, Sicilian mountains. But her vitality, the flow of her animal spirits, her ingenuity, her zest in life, always impress me most. I noticed this in Southern as well as Northern Italy before the war, but I was still more struck by it in the fierce heat at the Italian base during the war. I believe it will carry her to the front among European nations. When in 1911, Italy declared war on Turkey, and landed at Tripoli, she was angrily criticised by several European nations. We, British, reproved her. That was unconscious hypocrisy. Neither Great Britain, nor France, nor the United States, was in a position to reproach the Italians over their action in Tripoli; for each had made empire in the same manner. Whether they had made it

more prudently or successfully is another matter ; and does not excuse their outcry over Tripoli.

From Rome I turned north through Florence and Bologna to Udine, which I reached in time to see the opening days of the Italian offensive on the Carso and in the Julian Alps. A battle on a bigger front than that of the Somme, British and French lines together, was starting when I reached the town ; and the Italian Headquarters Staff motored me across the maize plains out of which they had driven the Austrians earlier in the war, and gave me some wonderful views, at very close quarters in two instances, of mountain fighting on a great scale. The difficulties of an Italian offensive against Austria were often stated in 1916 and 1917. But they became a kind of common-form, and the statement, by reason of its frequency, lost force. People here did not dispute the Himalayan nature of the Italian difficulty—but they were not truly seized of it. When the second Italian Army broke before the German and Austrian counter-offensive in the autumn of 1917, and the enemy got through, people were reduced to some old wiseacre, foolish saying about the Latin races not having the Anglo-Saxon courage or hardihood in war. But the Latin race in question had all the Anglo-Saxon courage in war. There were deeds, not only by individuals, but by whole companies and battalions of Italians in the war—certainly in that offensive of August, 1917—supreme in courage and self-sacrifice. The bravery and skill of the Alpini no one ever questioned. The Sardinians, throughout the struggle, lived up to their record in the Crimean war, into which Cavour flung himself with rare genius—and out of which the Kingdom of Italy may be said to have sprung. But not alone the Alpini and Sardinians, troops also from the plains of Northern Italy, and troops from Sicily and the far south, fought with equal devotion. Italy had her dark hours when the Second Army gave way ; but the conclusion that therefore the Latin races could not fight was stupid and ungenerous. What Army in the war had not its weak divisions, its regrettable episodes ?

Italy has before her in social and economic reconstruction much the same problems that face us. I doubt whether any European nation can escape those problems. Statesmen and parties who insist in overlooking or supposing them are certain to be involved before long in revolutions in which class distinctions will disappear and property will come by a St. Bartholomew—very suddenly, perhaps, as Mignet, the French historian, reminds us happened in a single night's riot in 1789. Italy has to reconstruct, therefore. Her slums—like those of England, Scotland and Ireland—have to be swept away. More and more, her peasantry have to be brought into closer touch, owning touch, with the soil—as our peasantry have to be. Above all, that most menacing of world-evils to-day, the huge disparity between the possessions and conditions of rich and poor, has to be redressed—again, as it has to be redressed here in Great Britain. It is with Italy, I imagine, exactly as it is with us—the alternative to social and economic reconstruction is revolution. The problem is mighty; but those nations will find a solution most safely, millions of whose men proved courage and devoted patriotism in the war; because those men will exercise a steadying influence in the days that are coming on us all. I do not doubt that the bulk of the Italian troops which I saw fighting in that Carso and Julian Alps battle had the love of Italy in their hearts. That should be an earnest of the country coming securely out of the ferment of labour which now faces Italy—as it does us.

The battle into which I suddenly found myself plunged on August, 1917, was for the Carso. It was a great move towards the Hermada, with Trieste, the magnet, beyond. But the Carso was only a section of the struggle. The line of battle stretched from the Adriatic, down to which the Carso runs, to Monte Nero in the Julian Alps; a thirty mile battle front, in which the Italians, helped by ten British and fourteen French batteries, were employing some five thousand guns.

The Carso or (Austrian) Karst is a limestone plateau

stretching along the coast of Istria. Its surface is intersected by long ridges and many ravines. Among the rocks of this wilderness are cavities or *dolini*, into which the little streams at the surface often disappear underground. The *dolini* alone are cultivated, and here the Austrians, and later the Italians on seizing the ground, were able to use the spade for making dug-outs and shelters. Elsewhere, the trenches had to be driven through solid rock, both armies being well equipped on the engineering side. The positions which the Italians had to take on the Carso looked simple compared with the Alpine positions. The hills scarcely ran up to three thousand feet. But when we recollect the strength of abrupt little Kemmel, or of the slight ridge at Vimy, the difficulty of forcing a powerful army, well entrenched, off the Carso positions is easily recognised.

The Austrian Army was being severely handled on August 19th, 1917, and for several days following, and the Hermada itself seemed, in the flush of that success almost a practicable proposition. We crept along the side of the ravine in which a British battery, a hundred yards away was hard at work, an Austrian battery responding in lively fashion; and we found shelter and an O.P. in a ruined monastery which commanded the grandest and the nearest view of a battle I ever dreamt of witnessing. Looking through the glass-less windows, I could see the sun shining on the metal utensils, water bottles, etc., of the Italian storming soldiers, who had just taken the next hill across the valley, perhaps six or eight hundred yards away, and were waiting to make another advance. I could distinctly see them moving now and then, to get shelter from the Austrian shrapnel, which was bursting in rust-red and white smoke over their heads.

That was a small bit of the battle. The whole of the superb panorama northwards was smoking, and crackling and flashing in one vast close-knit struggle, in which at least a million and a half men, fighting lines and reserves and transport, must have been engaged. I

looked down from the hill where the Italian soldiers were trying to find shelter from the enemy shrapnel, to the plain a mile or so distant, where armoured cars were supporting an infantry advance. The Austrians were trying to search out the cars with percussion shells as well as shrapnel, and had disabled one even as we reached the spot. That was about as near as a non-combatant can ever hope to approach a modern battle. At the nearest he sees, so far as the actual movements of the actual fighter are concerned, but little, and that little impossible to arrange and reasonably connect with any plan until it is fortified later by exact official facts and maps. A battle, to the onlooker, is "a mighty maze . . . without a plan."

You can get a better idea of the scope of a battle by going further behind, and becoming involved in the batteries and transport, with the battalions coming out to rest and with others marching up to go into action. We passed through miles of that scene behind the battle, and, leaving our motor in the road, clambered up the rocks to a high point where the Adriatic opened out to view, the Hermada and Trieste beyond. Below us lay Duino, and Grado which the Italians had taken, and the little ruined castle of the first shaped cloud-like against the deep blue of the Bay of Trieste.

Half-way up, we stopped a few minutes. A long line of Italian guns stretched along the winding road beneath us. As we watched, one of them in a pit two hundred yards below, at a spot we had just passed, exploded. We were discussing whether this was a burst gun, or whether an Austrian shell, when an odd little sound overhead, not at all menacing, diverted our attention, and something fell modestly at the edge of the track three yards away, and slid down into the rough herbage or "markis" growth, as it is termed on the Mediterranean coast. It was an enemy shell pitched more or less haphazard on this spot—a "dud," otherwise nothing could have saved us, we must have been casualties. The thing came to rest in the undergrowth, and we did not try to examine it. I believe the truth

about an unexploded shell is this ; you may handle it freely, and in the vast majority of cases nothing will happen. Nevertheless, the " dud " is alive, and may be so years hence ; and it has happened that a touch has aroused a " dud " from sleep. Where " duds " or where unused ammunition, lie thick, as on that horrible ridge, Vimy, I like to move warily. Some people are callous in regard to ammunition and loaded guns. I have always respected them. In the days before breach-loaders came into general use, sporting guns were often left for months with a live charge undrawn. Sometimes in north Hampshire the gun was put in a corner of the room, even the cap was left on. When the gun was again taken up by the farmer for use, there was rather a nice question what would happen on its being fired. A wary owner has been known to put the barrels distrustfully through the open door, close the door upon them, and then behind comforting shelter bring the gun to full cock and pull the trigger. The old muzzle-loader had treacherous moments. So have " duds." Nobody could tell for certain when the old gun would " go off " and when it would not, if a cap was on the nipple. A live shell lying about on the battlefield, likewise, may or may not be safe to handle.

In the Julian Alps one saw the same lines of guns as on the Carso, the cavalcades miles long, winding round and round up and up the mountains, and through the deep valleys. The landscapes there were so vast that man's struggle as viewed from many points was dwarfed in a humbling manner. There had been no human drama to match the war of 1914-1918 since man began. The Napoleonic epoch, except for the genius of one man, compared with it, was a single act play, a curtain-raiser. All the wars of old dwindle to nothing before it when we consider number of men, mass of material. The campaigns of Cæsar are, in its light, seen to have been little incidents. And yet this Alpine scene impressed on me that the war was a trifle compared with nature. The mark set on nature by this supreme effort of men and their machinery, millions of men, thousands of

guns spread along a thirty line of Alp and Carso, was insignificant. To deface the fields and coast of Picardy or of Verdun, to grind to dust the little piles of brick and stone and mortar—the war was adequate to that. But the war made no impression on the Alps.

We left the mountain road lately made by the Italian engineers, and climbed on hands and knees over the rocks and through the undergrowth to a gap through which we could see, far beneath, the attack by the Italians on the Austrians, who had been that day driven across the Isonzo, and were retreating up the heights on the other side of the river. I lay behind a low bank, and looked down on the stir and storm of the grappling armies. I was in the midst of a tiny Alpine pasture, studded with blue gentians and sages and thistles, among which flitted the butterfly and the bee. Nature held herself supremely aloof from the wars of the pigmies. Her green life, her wild creatures, her titanic landscapes, all were wrapt away from this terrible, ridiculous, impertinent hubbub; they were concentrated intensely on themselves. That was an illuminating contrast! Double the armies in those Alps, add to them the combatants and war material on the Western Front, the whole business would still have been insignificant beside the forces of nature.

Returning to Udine from the battle front, past Gorizia, which was then in Italian hands, and over the Isonzo, I saw a sunset of surpassing magnificence. No sunset I have seen in Switzerland, in the Desert, or in Italy, equalled it. When the sun, as a ball of molten metal, touched the top of the Carnic Alps, and disappeared behind them, the whole line of those mountains facing us turned pitch black. The long jagged outline of their proud summits were clipt out on the rose and purple of the after-glow, whilst between us and those Alps lay great green plains. I cannot explain the presence and the extent of this last colour, for the plains appeared to consist largely of maize ripe for harvest, and their heavy heads showed wheat-gold.

.

I spent a few happy days at Genoa before leaving Italy, staying at Cornegliano with Charles de Grave Sells, and watching from his garden in the evening the tramp steamers hugging the shore when they ventured out of port. If they were torpedoed, they would at least be able to save something from the wreck by rushing on shore and beaching themselves. They knew too much about submarines—like my diplomatic friend on the way to Paris—to trust themselves more than could possibly be avoided to the water. The spectacle struck me as comic ; but I understood their misgivings better when, in the summer of 1918, I visited in a salvage boat some of the wrecks along our own coastline and saw funnels and mastheads sticking up out of the water at various spots near the shore. I went on to one of these wrecked ships, a great oil tanker, which the divers had patched up, and the electric pumps brought to the surface. A few weeks after it was raised from the bottom of the sea and made watertight it was returned to America for re-plating. By raising that tank vessel, we saved America three quarters of a million pounds sterling. But the three quarters of a million was lost again before she could reach America. Sixty miles from land, a submarine came up and sank her. Within less than a year that ship had been mined ; set on fire ; shelled by a (British) destroyer in order to sink and save her ; raised ; patched up ; torpedoed and sunk for the second time. But even that, I believe, was not a record ; there being vessels twice torpedoed and sunk, and twice brought to life again. The salvage side of the British Navy in 1918, the daring achievements of the divers, the progress in the science of pumping, were carried out behind a veil of secrecy. It was necessary they should be, so long as the U boats were in the keeping of Germany. But we ought to have an official account of salvage now the peril is past. It was a great, patient work in the days when our dry docks were packed with invalids, having in their sides torn, gaping holes, twenty to forty feet across.

Whilst in Genoa I resolved to return in one journey

to my village quarters in Hampshire. A private reason urged me to do this, but I was told it was barely possible. The morning train from Genoa would not reach Paris till nine or later next morning, too late to catch the train to Havre from St. Lazarre. I learnt there was a second train from St. Lazarre at eleven o'clock, which would be in time for the boat for Southampton, but that this was forbidden unless one had special police or Government permission. I meant, however, to try. On the way to Paris I fell ill, and only saved myself from collapse by a little flask of brandy. Directly I reached Paris, I singled out a certain agent on the platform of the Gare de Lyon, and told him to get me into that eleven o'clock train for Havre.

"Utterly impossible," he told me, and was turning away.

I put twenty-five francs into his hand, told him it must be done, and added I would pay all expenses. That man was great. He pushed me into a cab in front of everyone; I was almost too weak to get into it in the ordinary way. He whirled me off to officialdom, pushed me in front of all comers there, forced me through formalities, whirled me to St. Lazarre, stopped everyone from stopping me, laid hold of me, and finally planted me down in the train well before it started.

That fulfilled the bargain. But, looking at me: "What about breakfast?" he murmured sympathetically. "You will get nothing on the journey." He was right. I got nothing. So weak I could hardly sit up, I reached Havre in the evening, and managed somehow to join the horrible, familiar passport queue at the pier. But my brandy was finished, except for a sip; I had not tasted food since I started from Italy, and, after an hour's wait, I collapsed in the crowd. However, I reached my Hampshire village quarters next afternoon, and walked two miles from Andover station to do so. Then I did what I had not done for years; I took almost a complete rest for ten days—and took it on a dairy farm among the cows and cocks and hens and pigs and puppies. There is hardly a better experience in life.

CHAPTER XI

ERIN

DURING the war I saw a fair amount of Ireland. England was full of delusions about Ireland, then as always. She started with a delusion that she could recruit Ireland through the ordinary official methods. I was told that was Lord Kitchener's notion. Whether it is true I do not know. I do know officialism killed recruiting in Ireland early in the war. Its want of humour, its want of imagination, in dealing with a race that in their purity at home are largely composed of humour and imagination, were disastrous. For instance, it not only plastered parts of Ireland with the Voluntaryist appeals of 1914-15, calling on fathers to enlist for fear their boys should ask them by and by: "What were you doing in the Great War, Daddy?"; it plastered the most ill selected spots in Ireland with these appeals. I was dining one night at Jammets in Dublin with a witty, delightful companion, Sir Maurice Dockrell, to-day M.P. for Rathmines. We were discussing, whether it was too late to do anything then—October 1917—to raise some more troops in Ireland, and whether a little life, late in the day, might not be put into an Irish munition movement. Sir Maurice advised me, when passing St. Andrew's Church on the other side of the road, to notice a recruiting appeal there, and admire the juxta-position hard by the mortuary flags. Against the railings there had been placed one of our Voluntaryist appeals for England: "Come, join your comrades under the flags." Another poster at the same place ran: "A call from the trenches."

That is the way we invited Ireland into the war! No wonder the Irish, being what they are, declined.

I had not been in Ireland long, before several Nationalist papers began to pay an attention to me I did not court. I was pointed to as an emissary from brutal England, employed to make a survey of the young manhood of Ireland, and push home agitation for conscription; whilst certain articles I did write about the Irish attitude during the war were mingled up with articles I did not write, and had nothing to do with. As a fact, in the Autumn of 1917, I was against applying a law of compulsory service to Ireland. For one thing I thought it would not yield us enough men, considering the armed force we should have to keep in the country to enforce the law. Secondly, I thought that a scrimmage in Ireland at that time would take the attention of our people at home, all parties and sections, off the war and the perilous military position. This second motive was the stronger with me. I knew many people at home, not realizing the full peril at the fighting fronts in France and Italy, were rather longing for a big, angry "scrap" over Ireland; which would have been helpful, however it ended, to the Central Powers.

Besides, I had to admit that the Irish had damaging retorts. Thus: "Before you conscript us in Ireland, why do you not conscript the half or three quarters of a million of young men in your own country whom you have exempted as "indispensable"? What about the ten or twelve thousand young men in your Civil Service whom you have exempted? What about the carded and badged men?"

If, with your tongue in your cheek, you replied: "Ah, but we mustn't put those men in khaki. Look at the great work they are all doing," the Irishman promptly countered with his:

"And look at the great work we are doing on the land! Has not your Government solemnly declared: 'The war will be won or lost on the farms'?"

That retort was sprung on me at once by an Irishman. I did not attempt to reply to it. I couldn't. We

dropped the argument, and instead went to lunch at, I think, the Dolphin. Nationalists, Sinn Feiners, Unionists, Neutrals, all talked politics there furiously. They talked politics furiously everywhere. They were vehement and abusive and hospitable and sympathetic, all at the same time.

Therefore, I did not write one word during that visit in favour of Irish conscription; whilst the story that I went over to work up capital for such a movement was false. The reason why I was in Ireland in 1917 was that a revolution was expected then, something resembling the 1916 outbreak in Dublin. I satisfied myself, on the whole, after I had been some weeks in the country, that there would not be a revolution or armed outbreak. I found the Irish excited, some of them half believing that the west and south-west might rise; and that Limerick might be cut off. No one thought seriously that Dublin would rise. That was impossible, for the police and military, thanks to their lesson in 1916, had the Dublin position in hand. Even had the Ashe procession—an extraordinary sort of spiritual carnival, which I saw there in October, 1917—been forbidden or broken up, Dublin would not have risen as in 1916, though there would have been a scrimmage, no doubt. It could not—the police and soldiers being too prepared and strong. None the less, I thought that the authorities were well advised in not interfering with that demonstration—they had done enough harm by their fluctuating policy over Ashe and his fellow prisoners—a policy that may be described in a saying of Dickens: “The blunderbuss of blunderheadedness.”

The common idea, then, that Ireland in the autumn of 1917 was on the point of rising was wrong. But one could not be a day, even in Dublin, without discovering that the Irish people were not in the war, were in all sorts of ways completely detached from it. The aloofness from war, then and later, was noticeable in various remote districts in England. I found it rather hard to realise the war in Cornwall, Westmorland, and elsewhere, in 1918. But there was this distinction between

remote English countryside and Ireland in 1917 and 1918: the first was asleep, the second wide-awake. There was another obvious difference: the remote English country districts could show few young men of military age out of khaki—though there were exceptions to which I drew attention in the “Times” in June, 1918. Ireland, on the other hand, was full of young men out of khaki. In Dublin they were in the streets, in the shops, on the trams, anywhere, everywhere. It was the same thing in Cork and elsewhere. In Ireland there was no opening for land girls or tram girls. As for Dublin, the dancing season was well in before I left. That was the only opening for girls out of work which I noticed.

An extraordinary fact about Dublin in the autumn of 1917 has never been stated in England. Dublin had then a problem of the unemployed! The whole of the rest of the world being over-employed and understaffed in 1917, Dublin was under-employed and over-staffed. That is the man-power curiosity of the whole war. When I reached Dublin, and began to talk to a friend about the serious position as regards the war and man-power, he could rather neatly counter by drawing my attention to the serious position as regards Dublin and man-power. The Corporation scarcely knew how to tackle the problem. One proposal was to rebuild those streets, Sackville and others, which had been destroyed by the Rebellion of 1916—a bright idea, had it not been for the monstrous price of bricks. However, something was attempted, something done. About the third day I was in Dublin, during my earlier visit there in 1917, I went round to examine the scene of the rebellion. I visited the site of Liberty Hall on the banks of the Liffey. It had been shelled by the military in 1916 from a boat on the river; an operation which, by the way, began in quite an Irish spirit by the gunners putting a shell or two through the bridge on the line to the hall. On reaching Liberty Hall, I found a group of young stalwarts; they were employed in reconstructing that memorable ruin.

It is all very fine to “slate” the Irish when we are

in England, to declare they want twenty years of "resolute Government," and so on. But it is not easy to "slate" them once we are over there. The Irish in Ireland are witty—the spalpeen who sells you the paper, the man who drives you in the jaunting car, the hall porter, the waiter, the shop assistant. The Irish in Ireland have charming manners, unless you tread on their coat tails. The Irish in Ireland are the most generous of hosts. They have a way with them—there is no doubt about that.

I found in 1917 and 1918 that the Irish regarded me as a stranger, an Anglo Saxon, or at least a Scot. It would have been idle for me to tell them that, after all, Ireland was my mother's isle, that her people were O'Beirnes of a place named Drumsna, in a county named Leitrim, whilst as to the other name, Dewar, had it not been awarded a Celtic origin? So I passed for a Saxon or Scot, and for a complete stranger to Ireland, though I had shot and angled in County Roscommon far back in boyhood. They introduced me to each other as one who "came over for a week or so to understand the Irish question." That was how an Archbishop put it. I suggested, in defence, that, considering people go to Rome for a week or so to understand Rome, they should be qualified to go to Ireland for a like period to understand Ireland.

In 1917 and 1918, the Irish had plenty of man-power, plenty of light, plenty of dancing. They also had horse racing. As to the last, we had better not say much. The British horse-raced and betted all through the war: the reason why they did not horse-race and bet more vigorously was this—the food for the horses was held up. I admit that when, late in March or early in April, 1918, I found myself at one of the hotels in Dublin in a crowd of smart, eager people, who were all intent on the great event of the day, the Phoenix Park Races—not the race for Amiens and Arras on the Western Front—I sickened, and wished a bomb would descend on that hotel and blot it out. But I had no evidence that the crowd was compact of Sinn Feiners. On the contrary,

my strong impression was that some of the people who were off to the Races that day, and who over their cigarettes and liqueurs discussed the card and made up their books, would vote quite another ticket at an election. Sinn Feiners, Nationalists, Unionists and people of no party—they went off to the Races. There is no political capital to be made out of that incident.

“But what about food in Ireland, when we were on short rations at home?” Well, when I was there, there was no severe restriction except on sugar. You could have a mutton chop twice a day, every day, if you paid for it. You could have plenty of butter and fish, likewise, if you paid for it. But, looking closer into this food question than I did at first, I would warn British people not to be too virtuous. In the first place, British people at home, who could pay, never were on short commons. The Germans—except the rich—went short of food in many places during the war, the Italians—except the rich—went rather short perhaps. We had plenty: enough meat, bread, margarine, milk, rice, oats, beer, cocoa, coffee, tea. I doubt whether the Irish were eating and drinking much more than we between 1914 and 1919. I cannot say I observed any gluttony. There was more butter and fish about, in some places more meat, whilst tea seemed always being served, particularly at nine or ten p.m. I also observed some whiskey in circulation. But I am convinced that no Briton—with plenty of money—need have gone to bed in Great Britain between August, 1914, and November, 1918, unreasonably hungry or thirsty. “The English,” says Burton in his “Anatomy of Melancholy,” “are, in general, very liberal and excellent feeders.” They “did themselves” fairly well in the war. So did the Irish.

As to the very poor in Ireland, as to the people who are doomed to live in the terrible slums of Dublin for instance, did they fare on the fat of the land in 1917 and 1918, whilst our rationed rich here were hungry? I think not.

But though there was not a vast deal in it between the

average consumption of food in Ireland and in Great Britain, I noticed that some of the Irish were tickled by the stories of food shortage in England. They believed in these heart-rending stories, and a nice Irish girl shuddered when I told her that we were only allowed so many ounces of meat a day in England. She wondered how we could live, and expressed thankfulness that she was not in England. Probably she consumed about half as much food in a week as many a rationed Englishman quite sorry for himself was doing. But the idea of being rationed was so terrible and menacing : that was what made the pretty Irish girl shudder.

When I reached Ireland in 1917, everybody was talking Sinn Fein, and I noticed that almost anyone passed for a Sinn Feiner. Unionists have been pointed out to me as Sinn Feiners. I have lunched or dined with them, and they have severely upbraided Sinn Fein, and pointed to other eminently respectable citizens as being imbued with its subtle poison : and they have usually gone on to upbraid opponents of the movement as being responsible for its increase and popularity.

"A nice fellow, so and so, but I'm afraid there's something of the Sinn Feiner in him."

One might often hear that said by the host of a guest on his departure ; and doubtless, the departed guest, on reaching home, made the same remark about his host.

Being in Bantry for a few days, I walked round the town after the usual mutton chop and tea, and went to a shop to buy some trifle. Whilst I was choosing what I wanted, the owner of the shop came up, and, seeing I was a stranger, instantly began politics. Everybody talked politics in Ireland in 1917 and 1918. I found that the war rather bored people. Some of them, however, were ready to argue that the British were a stupid lot, especially on the military side, and that German brain power and organisation must prove irresistible. Not all the Irish who took this line were Sinn Feiners and bitter Nationalists, any more than all the Irish who jaunted off to the Races were Sinn Feiners and bitter Nationalists.

This Bantry shopkeeper was very bright. He started on Home Rule, and the state of the country, was in favour of a wise settlement, and severely condemned Sinn Fein. I was struck by the talk of that man. He uttered no wretched old *cliché* about the Irish question, he was suggestive and stimulating. Why is it they cannot talk like that in clubs and at dinner parties at home? There was thought and distinction in what this shopkeeper in a small Irish town had to say about politics. I liked, too, his firm but not too violent or self-righteous condemnation of the errors of Sinn Fein.

Next evening I dined with some friends who knew all about politics and persons in the neighbourhood. They told me the spirit of Sinn Fein was very strong there. The position was threatening.

"Well, at least," I said, "you have got one good Irishman in Bantry, who is dead against the movement. He will have nothing to do with it; I gathered that from a talk with him. He spoke openly."

My friends enquired his name. I told them. They exchanged glances thereat; and then they told me.

"The biggest Sinn Feiner in the whole place!"

The Irish have a way with them.

It was the beginning of November when I visited Bantry, the oak woods at Glengarriff were at their full glory, and, thanks to two generous Irish friends, I was able to get round the bay, and spend part of a day there. We have nothing in England, I think, quite like the autumn oak woods of Glengarriff and the Bay of Bantry together. We have oak woods as good, and perhaps bays and inlets of the sea as good, and surrounding hills as good. But we have not the atmosphere of Ireland, and it is the union of this with the woods, water and hills that makes Bantry. I had visited Bantry in 1912, going thither in H.M.S. London with the Fleet for gun calibrating. I had seen the great ship hosts gathered at Spithead and the Solent since 1887, Queen Victoria's first jubilee. I had seen the British Fleet riding at anchor at Portland on a dark, wet summer evening, the blackness of the ships blotched out on the

prevading grey of the sky and land and water, and that was great. But I could not help feeling that Ireland could claim the finest ship pageant of all. Bantry Bay, from Sheep Point to Glengarriff, must be over twenty miles and on a summer afternoon in calm air, with the winding films of mist slowly shifting from hill to hill, it is a wonderful colour scene. The grey hills lie one behind the other in a series of perfect definition. The colours do not run into one another, but remain quite individual—so many greys, blues, purples, each with a realm of sky and hill to itself.

Things substantial became etherealised in these states of light and colour. I have seen them thus between Poole Harbour with its dove-shaded downs of Purbeck, and the far, faint lines of pencilled Hayling. The sea becomes highly rarefied, the hills lose their vast mass and weight, and all the world is seized away from matter.

That is the scene at Bantry, looking across the little green and purple Whiddy isle in the foreground and in the distance Berehaven ; and on the sky-line, hills of Kerry, swimming in colour ; and into these the Dreadnoughts are vassalled superbly, being divested, like the earth and sky, of all appearance of grossness and dead matter.

.

The " revolution " in Ireland did not occur. I did not believe it would, though I received, through friends in the Royal Irish Constabulary—a devoted, underpaid,* threatened, fearless body of absolute Irishmen—some rather arresting information that pointed to an uprising in November, 1917. But in any case, I should question, in this connection, the term revolution. There was a revolution in France in 1789, there is one in Russia : the Irish affair, had it occurred, would have been a revolt not a revolution. The Easter, 1916, affair in Dublin was a revolt, in which blood was shed and property destroyed. A revolution is a huge,

* But the R.I.C. do not mutiny ; and if they did, they would not bully and assault in rough gangs citizens who tried to fill their places.

economic, and social upheaval, in which private property and public institutions are alike flung into the melting pot. Sinn Fein was not ripe for that in 1916, in 1917, nor do I think it ripe in 1919. It must be remembered the Irish peasantry to-day have their land, are doing profitably with that land: the last thing they wish to see is their property going into the melting pot of a real revolution. They vote Sinn Fein, but plumping for revolution is another thing.

Ireland, the best part of her countryside, is prospering to-day because the people have the soil, and because they are learning what to make of its products, thanks largely to Sir Horace Plunkett. He failed to bring about any settlement of Ireland through the Irish Convention. But success is by no means the true test of greatness, or the true test of patriotism. Quite average minds, and remarkably mean souls, are often successful, and enduringly so throughout their worldly careers. Many inferior people have made greater "hits" in Ireland than Sir Horace Plunkett has so far. All the same he is one of the best men we have in politics to-day, and the cleverest.

During the last fortnight of March, and for a few days in April, 1918, I was constantly between Dublin and Foxrock, and most of the time I was staying at Foxrock. Plunkett was then absorbed in the final passages and revision of the Report of the Irish Convention. He was, with his two friends and secretaries, at work all day, every day, on the Report, and the only relaxation he allowed himself was preparing "Little George," the wittiest and the most literary official document which has ever been prepared in these Islands—but a mystic document, alas!—and playing chess with me after dinner. I tried what little I knew of the openings against him. I won a pawn or two, or the exchange, commonly. He won the game, invariably. He said, after a signal reverse I had just experienced—not only beaten, but checkmated before I could resign:

"You were really playing that game better than I was."

Now, that had been my impression a minute before

he checkmated me ; and it occurred to me, when he applied this balm, that the Irish have a way with them. An Englishman might have tried to apply the balm, but would have floundered over the operation. A Scot would not have made the attempt at all.

The last passages of the Irish Convention synchronised with the early passages of the mighty rush of the Germans, first on the British, then on the French. It looked as though the Germans might reach Paris, press us back out of Calais, at least reach Amiens. We did not know in those days quite what a hammering they themselves had taken, notably at Arras on March 28th in hammering us. Nor did we know till months later that they were to shoot their bolt in pressing over the Marne. There was accordingly not the faintest chance that the British people would assent to Home Rule in any conceivable form unless accompanied by Irish Conscription. The British, feeling themselves threatened by defeat in France, would have assented to Home Rule on no other terms : and the British attitude therein would have been absolutely right and natural. To apply conscription to Ireland in the autumn of 1917 was one thing, not a good thing (it would have been far more profitable to apply it immediately after the rebellion of Easter, 1916). To apply conscription in the Spring of 1918, and at the same time grant a measure of Home Rule (bearing in mind Home Rule was already on the Statute Book), would have been quite another thing. Lord Midleton, the best of men, was ready to assent to a Home Rule settlement including excise after the war. I thought we might have gone further and given them customs, too. Conscription and customs—the British quid for the Irish quo. However, the attempt at a settlement failed almost immediately : and nine months later Erin presents us with the latest addition to her family, a body of 73 Sinn Feiners for the British Parliament. It is no use—we have to settle with Ireland. I am all in favour of settling with her generously : but there must be nothing in the nature of separation.

CHAPTER XII

TRAVELLING DAYS: TO ITALY FOR ITS COLOUR

I USED to spend my holidays in roaming over the Home and South West Counties of England, and, to a lesser extent, the Midlands, the Eastern counties and the North; and I must have walked and cycled many hundreds of miles, at all seasons, along the by-roads and farm lanes and over the wild downs of Hampshire alone. You cannot know intimately even one large English county till you have given years to it; and then, at the end, there is so much about it you know nothing of. The chief attraction to me was landscape, the discovery of new points of view, the revisiting of old familiar ones, often to find in them some fresh life. After the landscape, the human side, hamlet life, drew me; and birds, trees, plants, butterflies, with a little of the antiquities and folklore.

To understand English countryside, one must ride or walk or cycle; and one must go leisurely. To motor means to go so many miles a day, to cover ground—to get there and back in so many hours, or minutes preferably. Motors and landscapes, motors and wild life, motors and the hamlet character, do not always agree. To learn something under the surface about southern England, its remote villages and churches and tithe-barns and peasantry, and about the shy sources of its clear streams, its hangers, downs, lanes, immemorial footpaths, the train has to be left at the station, the motor at the garage. Often the cycle has to be left behind the hedge, or at the village inn, and the man must take to the open commons and the faint tracks through farm-

lands. As for highways, only a little of the best landscape can be seen from them, and next to nothing of the wild life. Cobbett, who rode affectionately but defiantly about England, chose largely the highways, as his "Rural Rides" shows. He contrived to see a good deal of England because he had an extraordinary eye for a country, for the lie of the land. But the object of his rides was largely political. He sallied forth to reform England; and as a rule, it must be admitted even by his admirers, to hit somebody over the head.

English country roads by night are good to travel on, during summer nights, as well as by daylight. I learnt that by cycling out of the heart of London through the month of June one year, starting at about midnight or half-an-hour after, and reaching my quarters in Kent near Knockholt Hill at dawn. There were three distinct stages on each of those night journeys, two repellent, the third glorious. The first was meaner London and its suburbs; next the environs of London; finally, the countryside. The second stage was worse than the first, though that first included the Old Kent Road. Rows upon rows of yellow brick cottages and villas in the building; new roads in the rough; sad fields into which rubbish is shot; forlorn, scattered houses beyond these, with shoddy outbuildings; hideous plots where grow infinite rhubarb and cabbage; hedges formed of barbed wire, of deal boards pasted over by the bill-sticker, and of elm underwood which I have found it hard to regard as the same wood that we see in the elmy lanes of England. Those objects by day are drab and pitiful; but how pitiful they can look is only known late at night when all the lights of the scattered houses have been put out and the roads are lonely and lifeless except for the policeman and his flash lamp. At such a time there appear to be miles and miles of these forbidding, sinister environs beyond the trim, respectable suburbs of London. You half despair of being quit of them before dawn. But at length the last lamp-post, outbuilding, cabbage and rhubarb plot, rubbish and accomodation field, the last savage dog tearing at his

chain, and the last policeman with his lamp, is passed ; the last brick and paling of the outermost fringe of outermost London are behind you, and it is wild Kent country with nightjar and nightingale.

I thought I had never seen the sky quite so deep a night-blue as when I turned off the highway and went slowly through moonlit woods. Sometimes I came by a late train, instead of cycle, into Kent, and walked seven miles to the village. I walked more than once through two hours of opaque darkness, sometimes stopping to wonder at the tingling stillness of the country night at midsummer. Only the barn-owl and the corncrake occasionally broke that silence. But, a few minutes after two o'clock, the first lark would be fluttering up with a few sleepy notes. Another interval of silence followed. Then a score of larks suddenly were up—the light was beginning. Ten minutes later, larks were up all round and above in a passion of song ; and, as I turned in at the garden gate, it used to strike me that there was a spiritual revelation in the freshness of the air at that hour. The earth gives me in the minutes before full light the impression of something just created. The hand of God is so much clearer then than when the day's work starts. I have felt this in the winter, and even in the autumn, no less than in the spring or at midsummer.

After being steeped in the spirit of home landscape, year in year out, in the most unchanging districts of absolute old England, a passion grew upon me to see the South of Europe, the Mediterranean and its African coast ; above all, to see nature and human life there in early spring. So I went across France, where I had scarcely been since childhood, and down through Italy, and repeated more or less the same journey in two or three successive years.

In England, so Aurora Leigh declared, half kindly, half in scorn :

You understand the letter—ere the fall
How Adam lived in a garden.

To Aurora, fresh from her godlike Italy, little lowly England appeared compact of trim fields, tied up with hedges ; of crumpled plains that pass for hills, parterres that pass for plains, and parks instead of wildernesses ; whilst, in the pause of her finer meditations in these scenes, she was set thinking of cackling fowls and of her eggs for to-morrow morning's breakfast. If the countryside in France showed in those days what it shows now, Aurora Leigh must surely have come from Italy to England by sea all the way. She could not have travelled by day from Marseilles to Paris or Turin to Paris on the lines which to-day carry the trains of the Transcontinental, for it is France, as we see it along these roads hour after hour, hundreds upon hundreds of miles, which is the great garden with " trees round . . . ready to be clipped," and France that looks

A Nature tamed
And grown domestic like a barn-door fowl.

The old notion of England being the garden country must be going out among Americans who have travelled through France and Italy and Sicily, and seen how intensive farming and gardening are done there. The park or the parterre may still be with us, but it is France that is the garden and the fowl-run. It is there the trees are ready for clipping—at least those which have not lately been shorn of every scrap of pollard. I sat down in the smoke-room of a Mediterranean steamer,* and tried to get on paper some impressions of the scenery from Dieppe to Paris and from Lyons or thereabouts to Marseilles. I knew I had seen many scenes of loveliness, fresh and stimulating to me as I travelled through them ; but now, only a day or so after the land journey, I found my chief impression was one of material wealth and economy and industry ; of every acre, every rood, of soil tended and fostered as in England, it seems, we foster only here and there the richest little bits of country-

* I rather think it was the *Carthage* which was torpedoed during the war. She was a fast ship, and delightful ; but terrible in rough weather.

side, the market garden close by large cities and railways stations with good services of trains.

Wonderful France ! We want no census, no official figures, to tell us how rich you are, how you keep putting out your money at compound interest on the soil, and how the interest must keep on growing into capital. The idea of France being ruined by the war is too absurd altogether.

I wanted to see scenery travelling through France. I did see some scenery in the prime hours after dawn in the south ; whilst in Normandy I saw woods of sorts—carefully gardenized and pollarded woods—and in spring golden with daffodils. But when I tried to set down something about these things, and about the marvellous freshness of the morning as one saw it flushing the land around Avignon, I found I could only set down reflections about the wealth of France, about the kempt appearance of all the French chalets and farm-houses and cottages, the cleanliness of the blinds, the daintiness of all things about a French home, the fresh paint on the walls and palings, and the way the poplars had been shaved over-night. The trees fascinate me in France. All who are interested in afforestation should go to the poplar and consider its shape. Is it not the most intensively farmed thing in a land that is all intensively farmed ? I soon found—and found it in Italy as well as France—that I was ignorant of “ arboriculture.” In Hampshire we cut down underwoods and trees in our simple, old way, and make wattle hurdles and faggots, and to-day the faggots are often left to rot in the coppices because our people will not be at the trouble to cart them away. In France and parts of Italy a skilled forester would as soon think of cutting down a sound tree as a skilled dentist of pulling out a sound tooth. A tree is capital in many parts of France, and in Italy too ; a few poplars are a dowry for a French farmer’s daughter. A poplar pollarded and repollarded, with an eye, it seems, to each twig, means pea-sticks, palings, vine props, and a score of other things, besides fuel. In England, a poplar in a wood is a weed. We

are too rich, or too poor, in England to trouble about poplars.

The prosperity of France strikes one in the towns perhaps not less than in the country districts as we travel south. One is conscious of it in Marseilles, though for days together the whole population of Marseilles seems to do nothing but be lazy and enjoy itself in the open air. Is not the French touch the touch of Midas? One was conscious of this even in Amiens during the war. What burgundy they had there!

Going to Italy through France, the most prosperous and industrious parts of France, one is sure to set up a high standard as to what prosperity in a country means. We compare Italy with France, and as a result our feelings when we reach Italy will be that it is a very poor land, backward and indolent. The main abiding business of Italy, we assure ourselves, is beauty; and true of Italy's mainland, how profoundly so of Sicily at the primavera of the year! Three or four Sicilian scenes, by no means the most famed as tourist scenes—two of them being in no guidebook list—shift before me as I write, supreme in loveliness. I missed somehow at early morning the scene at Trapani when the steamer drew clear of the bay, but day after day in Palermo itself, I found myself wandering in the wild gardens of the Villa Trabbia. These town gardens of Sicily are marvellous. Many of the trees were as white with blossom as the wild cherry of English woods in a favouring April—the most beautiful Spring thing that flowers in England—whilst grassy little paths winding among delicate flowers and foliage are rosy through the thick falling showers of peach and almond petals. Wistaria clambers over trees and stonework alike, putting out an immense wealth of bloom, whilst towards evening the air begins to be scented by stocks and by orange trees. Here within a stone-throw of the Via della Libertà, a main thoroughfare of Palermo, nightingales, blackcaps, and Sardinian warblers sing and nest, whilst those liveliest of sprites, the serin finches, engage in their love frolics, darting in and out among the lemon

trees which are dropping ripe fruit. It is a garden of paradise ; and, roaming in it, all the weight of the world as we know it at home in stressful England falls from us. Though this scene is in the city, we see nothing of the city. Monte Pellegrino towers above us into a blue and white sky, the tenderest of blue skies dappled with snow white whirly puffs and wisps of cirro-stratus cloud. I never saw mountains close at hand wearing quite that even, pure grey of Pellegrino and many of the mountains in the north of Sicily. For hours, for days together, the tint never varies in that clear atmosphere. We never wish it to vary. These hills have not the mist magic of Scottish Grampians, changing colour and glow with each fresh veil of wreathing vapour. They are grey all day. No mountain could be more plainly, simply, boldly coloured. Sicilian hills need no purple for beauty's heightening.

I am not sure whether this city garden was not the best scene of all in Sicily, in Italy, in the whole Mediterranean ; and next the tiny garden and cloisters—perhaps the choicest piece of miniature Norman work in the world—of San Giovanni d'Ermite, on the other side of Palermo. But for great spaces and for the sweep and curve of sea and typical wild Sicily, one goes to the hillside just below the ruins of Solunto. There the lesser palms, the fan palms on which Goethe made his observations about leaf and bud of plants, are springing wild all round ; and, among almond and peach and olive trees, the swallowtail and the Bath-white butterflies, with Cleopatra, the sulphur butterfly, sport and sail in the sun that is tempered by the breezes of the Mediterranean. Looking up one day from the flowers and butterflies of Solunto, the buried Greek city, and from Cefalu gleaming in the far distance, I saw four great birds spiring and soaring over Bagheria. They were griffen vultures. Many people think and say that Italy has no bird life left to-day. They are wrong. Large and small, I found birds almost everywhere I went, not only in Sicily, but on the mainland of Italy, in town as well as in suburbs, and through the country-

side. Wrens and the sprightly blue thrush were even in Rome itself among the ruins of the Forum, blackcaps and animated serin finches in the old Protestant Cemetery just outside the city, singing by the graves of Shelley and Keats. In the gardens of Naples chaffinches were brimming over with the blithe English chaffinch ripple ; with wrens and blackcaps here again. Under the Appenines and high up among them, nightingales, blackcaps, willow warblers ; and Sardinian warblers in the gardens and olive fields below, redbreasts and chaffinches above among the spring flowers. Nothing is more interesting in nature as an Englishman finds it in Italy than these changes from the typical southern flora and wild life to the most familiar flora and wild life of his own land. At the foot of an Apennine we are conscious of all that splendour of bloom and colour and scent that belong to the South. But we mount the hill a thousand feet, and are back in England. There are spots in Italy where in the early spring we can always enjoy something of nature in England.

O to be in England
Now that April's here,

but with your foot on the ground where primrose and white wood anemone are in full flower, and with the glad notes of chaffinch and the sweetness of the redbreast breathed in the ear, the feeling that you are in England is half convincing.

The first thing and the last thing that struck me in the land and sea around Naples was the extraordinary depth and fastness of their blues and greens ; and next to that I was most struck by the difference between the beauty of early English spring days and early Italian. Shelley wrote in one of his letters from the South—I think from Naples—that the Italian spring had nothing quite so good as that “first mild day” which Wordsworth praised. He was right. The sensation which Wordsworth got into those lines about the first mild

day—"day with each minute sweeter than before"—if not peculiar to England, is felt only in northern countries where winter is terrible and the start of spring icy. You scarcely feel in the South that each minute is sweeter than before, only that each minute is as sweet as the minute before. This, at least, was my experience for three early springs—1911, 1912, 1913—first in Sicily, then in the Atlas—where the spring seems to start with hawthorn and mimosa in full flower before the fig-tree is leafing—and in Southern Italy, round Capri and Amalfi and Vesuvius. Apply Wordsworth's saying to these Southern early springs, and its nicety is lost; it appears to be poetic rhapsody; whereas, used of the first balmy days at home, it expresses a fact.

Then there comes a later and very different phase of spring, in which surely the English scene can at least equal anything of the kind they know in the South. That is the May scene in any bit of quite ordinary England in Sussex, Surrey, Hertfordshire or Hampshire, where the landscape is not heroic, but a pleasant medley of park, lane, wood and common.

Take the country about Hatfield and Welwyn, to the north of London, or a mile or two of the woody country about Odiham and Winchfield, to the south west of London. I do not believe that in Sicily, or in the whole length of Italy from Alp to the most Southern Apennine, there is a scene of leaf colour and leaf wealth and variety to excel that of Odiham and Winchfield. I doubt whether there is a scene in the South that equals it. Each May I see it, I think that I have never recognised the splendour of the thing before. The phenomenon is by no means one of general green. Emerald green scarcely appears, even sap-green. The woods and parks appear in a wild confusion of ochres and umbers, of olives and siennas, with here and there a patch of red approaching crimson; I am certain of that red, because I have taken particular note of it for years past in England. It comes from oak-trees, and there are spots in the New Forest and other woods where you can go any May and find red leafing oaks among a far greater

profusion of yellow leafing oaks—yellow which varies in shade between the flower of the spurge, and even that of the primrose. This is not post-impressionism, but photographic fidelity to fact.

The effect of this confusion of tint is opposed to our idea of chlorophyl. We climb to a high spot and look round, expecting to find the landscape vivid green. It is hardly green at all ; but is presented in these other dyes, most of them subdued and chastened, with a few bright and biting, like those of October. It is not verdant or vivid green, then, but none the less, it conveys the impression of immense freshness and vigour.

So the Mediterranean scene has no two phases that correspond with and excel these two—Wordsworth's first mild day of March and the leaf landscape of England just before May is at its full. In other phases, on the whole I think it better not to strike comparisons—though they will creep in at times. It would be hard to keep them quite out, for instance, in speaking of the colour of those southern seas. Byron confessed to Trelawny that he was a land-lubber, and merely got up the jargon of the sea and ships for the purpose of his poetry ; but he added that he did know better than "that duffer Shakespeare," who had written of the sea as green—Shakespeare was all wrong—the sea was blue ! Byron might have excused the duffer had he and Trelawny just come round the last fold of the coastline from Amalfi and looked on Salerno and Vetri, as I saw them on an April day, lying white and gleaming in the sun across a great band of pure green sea, no tinge of blue in its whole long wide spread till near the land on the other side lay another narrower band of dull purple ; beyond that, the faintest cloudy outline of low coast to the southern limit of the Gulf, and then reared up on the horizon, forty or fifty miles away, Apennines beyond Paestum.

Therefore the Mediterranean, great spaces, realms of it, without illusion can be green, true like the gems, and with the transparency of gems.

But blue is its usual habit, and the coast from Capri

to Amalfi taught me, what I never suspected before at home or abroad, the sea can be blue in spite of the heaviest, greyest sky. I knew that the sea does not servilely take on the colour of the sky, that the sea adapts rather than merely adopts sky blues. The scenes at the Solent and about Boscastle cliffs, and at the Bass Rock in Scotland, even in mid-winter, had made me realise this. But till I saw the Mediterranean between Sorrento and Amalfi, especially near Positano, I had no idea that the sea can appear—and be—a deep wonderful blue, though the whole sky be covered by a gloomy pall of formless stratus cloud. It surprised me the more because my belief that though the sea does not copy it depends on sky blue for its own blue had just been fortified on another part of the coast. Wandering among the wild tracks and mule-paths in the Apennines about Levanto I got many glimpses of the sea far below, and in those two or three days the Mediterranean was grey as any northern sea on a dull day.

In the same way it can be English grey at Naples for days, perhaps for weeks together. But I see now that the guide books are right in declaring that the sea at Capri is of a peculiar, intensive blue. I know, moreover, that the picture postcards do not put on the colour too thick. They cannot. The blue of Capri burns. The only blue I have seen to surpass it in intensity is that of the Mediterranean by Marsa and Sidibou-Said, on the coast of the Regency. But that has been on a hot afternoon, with the sky at the time very deep blue. At Capri, the sea blue in early spring can be deep and lustrous, even when the sky tint is only pale azure.

Something depends, I dare say much depends, on the height from which we look down at the sea—and the height is great at some points between Sorrento and Amalfi. Much depends, doubtless, on the angle, on the light, the state of the atmosphere. The working up of colour is a conjury of lights and angles and refractions. Yet, even when some scientific mind has explained it away, this fact remains; with the mighty pillars of that coast from Sorrento to Amalfi, wrapt about

by wreathing clouds and mists, the horizon blind with rain, and the entire sky covered with dark scud, one can still look down into blue deeps.

.

On the boat from Naples to Capri, I met one day with a small, thin, pale American lady, who said she would get into the Blue Grotto if any boat would take her there. As there was a heavy swell that day, one could only locate the entrance to the Grotto by a whiff of mist where the water coming from the cave met the water rolling in against the rock. Actually there were one or two boats already in the cave, which they had entered probably before the swell grew bad, and one of them shot out in a blinding spray. It held two people besides the boatman, one of them a girl half-mad, half-dead, through cold and sickness. Yet, the small American woman bucketed about on the swell, urging her boatman to make the attempt, ducking her hat, with its red plume, never for a moment beaten, though in the end she had to return to Naples, without the Grotto to her credit.

It is in this spirit day after day that the stream of travellers settle down to take the drive from Sorrento or Castellamare to La Cava, or from La Cava to Sorrento, the finest drive, all the authorities agree, in Europe. The Sorrento drive is routine, and there is with some of us a strong, conceited wish to revel against routine. One would much like to exercise a little originality, and see Amalfi and its coast in a way that no guide or guide-book insists on. But this thing is not to be done; there is no room for originality. You must go with the stream; your choice, your free will, is exercised in this—shall it be La Cava to Sorrento or Sorrento to La Cava? The rest will be routine. It is routine to break the journey at Amalfi and sleep there, routine to lunch at Positana. According to whether you go in a carriage with one horse or a carriage with two, the drive divides itself into regular, exact stages. There is no more chance of finding a new way to see Amalfi and its coast

than of finding a new way up Piccadilly or to Brighton for the week-end.

The thing is a groove in which everybody who goes to Naples must run. But one has not been in it for more than an hour—starting from Sorrento—before admitting that here is one of the best experiences of life. It does not matter how many thousands are doing the drive every spring. The voices of globe-trotting tourists, coming from above, from below, do not matter. It does not matter when they are all talking at the same time in the same hotel room on the way. Guides and their groups and the stale repetition of facts so informing that they ne'er inform do not matter. Because by the time the top of the hill at Sorrento is reached, and the ascent to Positana begun, a complete content comes to one. Everything, everybody, is forgot in that sheer cliff and peaked precipice and sea.

From Sorrento to La Cava is, I think, about twenty-six miles, Amalfi being half-way; and from near the top of the hill behind Sorrento to the last jutting promontory round which Salerno at length appears, the splendour of the scene is constant. The thing is God-like. It is "all a wonder and a wild desire." It is a tour de force in land and sea scape throughout, one that never slackens its power to delight, to surprise. Yet, I fancy there are points where the scene culminates. There is a spot near Positana where, looking back, you see fold behind fold of cliff growing faint and fainter. Next day, there is the point beyond Majori and Minori where you stop a crowded minute or two and look back for the last time on the Amalfi group of villages or small towns—the great curve and sweep of the azure deeps!

Finally, there is the point where Salerno and Apennines fifty miles beyond come into view. Probably it is a matter of mood or chance or light which spots live longest in the mind's eye afterwards. The first sight of Amalfi itself, for instance, looking as if it were plastered white against the huge vertical cliff, is wondrous.

Why leave Amalfi, once found—why not cut adrift from all past experience and habit and spend the rest

of life in the sun and the blues? It needs only about six or seven lire a day apiece.* People who never play for an idle minute or two with this thought in the sun of Amalfi or Capri or Sicily—how can they hope to get their fill of joy out of Italy? There is a scene in "John Christopher," where the hero gets out of the train which has broken down by a little village under the Apennines near Spezzia, and takes a boat, and by an by waves a hand gaily, carelessly to his train when he sees it starting again without him. But the thought strikes one when reading the passage—what about his luggage? Even a musical genius, like Christopher, cannot go to Rome without that. Who among us can afford to treat lightly the question of luggage?

We cannot, however much we like to do so, pay the driver at Amalfi, or one of its neighbouring villages, and lay out the rest of our days to good profit there; in practice there is no cutting adrift from the luggage of life even in that sun and sea of God. To-morrow we must move on with the stream of tourists who are "doing" Italy on strict business lines, seeing their full money's worth of church and campo santo and Roman bath and buried temple, and every point in the landscape which is in their hand books or the programme of their thoroughly efficient guides and couriers; gleaning their full money's worth of dates, too, and hard historic records all the way; little heaps swelling into large piles of bald fact, dead and dry the far larger part of it, impervious to the imagination; still for all that—or perhaps the more for all that—quite satisfactory in every way, being strictly in the bond, farly settled over the counter, or with the concierge, before the start.

One must join this business-like, quite commercial stream, and flow with it to the end of the Sorrento and La Cava course. Still, one can travel in one's own line. Louis Jennings, asked by a commercial traveller in the Rutland Arms, Bakewell, what his line was, answered: "I travel in ideas." That sounds arrogant, but there is no arrogance if we claim to travel in faëry instead of in

* These are pre-war figures.

fact. It is the essence of faëry that you should not know too much, should not be didactic or superior. Faëry is a shy visitor, easily scared away by hard information. It is of the essence of faëry that you should not have at your finger's end the best science or the best scholar theory. It flits unconcerned over the latest excavation at the Roman Forum or Pompeii.

Before going to Amalfi, one can ascertain too much about the old sea power of Amalfi, or at Monreale Cathedral in Sicily too much about the Normans and Saracens. The thing can be as fatal as the common custom of travelling from Sorrento to Amalfi with the hood up when the rain clouds swim about the huge pillars fretted and honeycombed with giants' caves.

Wandering casually about Pompeii—which is the best way to see Pompeii—it is good not to hire guides, but to go sometimes where guides are. I like to filch a little information from the guides. It is only getting back some of one's own. The guides, even when we do not hire them, filch from us. They filch our places in the trains and hotel omnibuses for their parties. They thrust in front of us, politely but firmly, and say the rooms have all been engaged, and the places at table. They claim the carrozza we are just going to step into. At Pompeii all gates unlock and swing open to the guides and his flock, and, if we do not go in with the flock, we may not get in at all; for the custodians at Pompeii keep some of the best spots on their own beats under lock and key, and show no desire to let you in unless you pay them. This thing is natural, and it would not be practical to unlock for every stray visitor. The tips are not excessive, but it is irksome to be continually sorting out nickel and copper from silver and calculating what this man and that man ought to have.

At Pompeii, one would rather roam about, serene and independent, unruffled by such nagging questions. Besides, nickle is nickle. Lamb said he disliked being approached by beggars; if he refused alms, it was uncomfortable; if he gave, he was the poorer. It is

uncomfortable not to tip every custodian who opens a gate for you, and if you do tip all the custodians—on the whole, a decent class—you are the poorer. So when you chance to be passing, say, the Casadi di Orbellius Firmus at the moment it has opened to the guide and his flock, human nature says: "Go in." But it is not nature, at any rate it is not my nature, to listen long to what another man's guide or one's own guide says. The charm of travel, of strange places, is largely in the sense of discovery. There always is chance of discovery. It is a mistake to suppose that the world has been all discovered. The contrary is much truer. But, to discover, we must act on our own impulse and whim. We must wander about Pompeii, instead of having it catalogued and mapped out for us.

Perhaps after two or three visits some idea of the place will begin to take shape. I brought away from Pompeii two distinct sets of impressions. The first relative to the live side, the nature side, and to the colouring of the place. Pompeii is not quite the spot a man would choose to study wild life in—yet I cannot forget seeing the swallow-tail butterfly, *Papilio machaon*, fresh from the chrysalid, flying over the fossil city. The human side of Pompeii is to me all fossil; I cannot see it in any other light. Skulls and bones do not distress me in Pompeii more than a shark's tooth or a starfish from the Headdon clays and sands would. But what an odd playing-ground for *machaon* over the tufa walls, and the ashes and fossils! It reminds me of the little skyblue butterfly I saw sporting among the tombstones at Basing, and the rank grass of that English cemetery—levity and Lethe. And in spring, wandering near the Forum of Pompeii, I heard a sweet, wild note, and stopped to listen to the blue rock-thrush that was nesting somewhere in that confusion of ruined walls. That little irony at any rate had not hitherto been discovered, I prided myself, by any guide.

Of course the position of Pompeii is one of the things that have been discovered. I have read in one of the books the theory that they discovered it more than two

thousand years ago. It is said that even when the city was whole the people sitting in the larger theatre within the walls could enjoy the natural setting of Pompeii. The idea is they were full of the Greek spirit ; could understand and absorb the beauty of the scene. And marvellous the beauty of Pompeii is in its many lights and glows ! Pompeii is set in something like a semi-circle of hills, Naples, Apennines and the Vesuvius range ; and these hills are often glowing in subdued rose and violet lights. Sitting on one of the upper tiers of the theatre by the Forum you see all this ; and when the sky is a little overcast, and even when the sky is all blue, you see a constant subtle change in these ethereal Apennine blooms and glows. Again, between columns and across low walls, and from the steps of the theatre, you see the tremble and the gleam of the sea, and the grey mysterious isles of the great Bay, Capri and Ischia, and a glimpse of Procida.

What a theatre, site and scene-painting ! But if these fabled Pompeians saw such things from the Greek point of view—and if the Greek point of view was at all like that of people who are absorbed in the nature spirit to-day—Pompeian thoughts and eyes must have turned away from the play and the mimes. However, I do not know how the Pompeians viewed the hills and sea. One theory of Pompeii is that it was decadent at the time of its ruin. Whether that would prevent its people from seeing the Apennines and the sea with its isles through the Greek eyes may be doubtful. What is called decadence to-day is not insensitive to such things. But, if decadent eventually, what must Pompeii have been like in the time of its strength and glory ? Suppose Winchester or Salisbury, suppose Reading or Bedford, were destroyed by a volcano to-morrow and fossilised, what would be said of them when excavated in the year 2119 ? Might not the last two, at least, be condemned as decadent provincial towns ? The most loyal citizen of Bedford, Reading, even of Winchester and Salisbury, after a few hours, first at Pompeii and then in the Naples Museum, may think twice before saying how backward

those poor Pompeians were compared with ourselves and our town councils and municipal works. True, much of the wall work inside the houses at Pompeii is not very good. I would as soon have English wall-papers and friezes and dadoes with their trumpery designs as some of this Pompeii work ; and I would far rather have whitewash or distemper. Rubbish, a good deal of it would be declared, had it not been found at Pompeii. In a corner of Pompeii, one day, a custodian came and spoke to me, and, as there was no one else near, I began to talk in dog-Latin or worse Italian. The end of the talk was that the man carried me off to see some private baths underground, and, in another part of the same building, skeltons of mules and dogs and a far smaller one, neatly pieced together. Behold "L'uccello!" --the common barn-door fowl, I took it to be. Finally, pleased with his pay, and becoming a little mysterious, he beckoned me on to another house, a place of doubtful resort, and showed me two or three indecent little wall-paintings that gave away the secret. I never saw much worse rubbish or worse ornament. It consisted of love passages among gods and goddesses--and what gods and goddesses!

One must not forget that the people returned to Pompeii after the ruin, and carried off the finest works and most of the treasure ; nevertheless, look what glorious work still was left, most of it now in the National Museum at Naples! What English provincial town of to-day could show two thousand years hence, art and ornament so curious and fine? Go into the gold-room of the Naples Museum, and look at many things there, and in neighbouring rooms ; but look chiefly at two small statues of women, one of them dressing her hair. Then think of the statues in an English town, think of the statues in Parliament Square ; the frock coats, the prancing steeds, the roll of parchment. If Pompeii A.D. 79 was decadent, how do we stand in 1919?

Few things in Pompeii appealed to me more than the dog and the faun. That dog is looked on, as a rule, in the

light of a curiosity, but there is another way to view it. May it not be recognised as an object of profound significance? In its terror and agony, it caught and keeps for ever, as no other thing in Pompeii, the attitude of the city when the end came. A mould was taken of the dog, or of the hollow where it was buried by the ashes, and the representation is far more arresting than that of any of the moulds of human beings in the Museum at Pompeii. I have not any photograph or picture of it before me, but, writing from memory, I think *it* appears lying on its back or side, feet stuck upward, mouth open. It is chained, and is shown in its frantic effort to escape the doom. Thinking of the dog, its feet thrust upward, one may remember the strange passage which Carlyle quotes from Mercier. Mercier during the Terror noted a naked foot pointing to the skies in one of the tumbrils, which moved him greatly—he thought he should see it again on the Day of Judgment; and Carlyle wonders why—was it as of one spurning high heaven?

As the dog typifies the agony and terror of the doomed city, the faun typifies the abandon, the spirit of levity, which dwelt and caroused at Pompeii as at all other carnal places, old world and to-day, since the start of civilisation. Many things have come intact from the ashes at Pompeii, but none much more than this faun. It has given its name to a house in the Strada della Fortuna, supposed to be a characteristic home of a rich Pompeian. The original is in the Naples Museum, but a copy is shown in the impluvium of the Casa del Fauno at Pompeii. It is a little bronze of a satyr or faun dancing with abandon, full of the lust of wine and life and motion, perfect in the beauty of form and action. It is the spirit of the Persian poet, not less than of the Pompeian: it is the spirit that made them inscribe in the African city: “Venari, lavari, ludere, ridere, occ est vivere.” You see in the figure of the dancing faun, and of the little bronze Narcissus, physical perfection, the same worship of beauty, though in another form, everywhere in Naples and Italy. It is a satire for the

moralist that those things should have triumphed over time and doom to fill us with delight to-day.

Narcissus and the dancing faun were too much for Vesuvius ; but what a huge attraction that mountain has over all things within its range, and all of us who have once watched from Naples its wicked little wisps of smoke ! Vesuvius, after all, is, with Etna, the greatest thing in Italy. Vesuvius is the livest of the world's mountains. Jungfrau and the Silberhorn and Eiger, Weisshorn and Mont Blanc itself, are nobler, lovelier. But they are dead mountains. Vesuvius is living, breathing ; Vesuvius is more of a personality than any Alp or Apennine.

Having once felt this immense thrall of Vesuvius, we are not much concerned with other mountains or volcanic remains in Southern Italy. There is the Solfatara, for example, across the bay. We were given exact directions as to how to see Solfatara on the way to Baiae ; but, the sun being hot and the drive from Pozzuoli to Baiae excellent, we would not be at the trouble to get out and visit the place ; whilst Monte Nuovo is but worth a passing glance. Why put yourself out to visit the Solfatara when from the hill at Naples you can look for hours every evening to Vesuvius, and hope to see it glow in that peculiar, wondrous light which sometimes takes it ?

It is commonplace to say how reckless in men to build and live all about Vesuvius, and creep ever higher and higher towards its cone, husbanding every yard that will grow a vine or vegetable, in spite of the terrible lessons Vesuvius has taught them ! We all say it. The truth is, the greater the lesson he gets, the greater will be the recklessness of the Neapolitan. If Vesuvius were a live volcano in England instead of Italy, the same thing would be seen ; a little time after it had poured out lava and mud and ash, and killed us in hundreds or thousands, and spoilt our homes and crops, we should return to Vesuvius and re-build, and creep up its sides anew. I suppose that sooner or later Vesuvius will fly into a violent passion again, and pour down her lava streams,

as she poured them to Torre Annunziata not a generation since ; there is no guarantee of science that she will not one day at a stroke destroy all the towns along the shore, Resina, Portici, Torre del Greco, Torre Annunziata, Boscoreale, with fire and flood, overwhelm them in Cimmerian darkness.

What a darkness Vesuvius might make, you understand if you go down to the shore by any of those towns, and look at the sand. It is black. The sand of the whole Bay of Naples is black. When Vesuvius is in a passion, ashes fall in Rome, Genoa, Turin ; they fall in Paris.

Conceive all these towns spoilt to-morrow as Messina was spoilt by Etna ; none the less, in a few years' time they would rise from the lava and mud and ash, finer than now. As Resina rose on Herculaneum, a new Resina and a richer would rise on the old. The greater the bale of Vesuvius to-day, the greater the balm to-morrow. The ashes and mud turn to gold : you need not much knowledge of the fruits of the earth to learn that lesson. The vine and the oranges and lemons, the miles upon miles of market gardens all along the Circum-Vesuvius railway explain the attraction of the mountain. Vesuvius will never lose its hold on men whilst it remains active and terrible. It will only come into contempt and be left to itself when its mud streams dry up and its ashes are all spent : for it is worth nobody's while to live for long under an extinct volcano.

CHAPTER XIII

TRAVELLING DAYS : TO THE ATLAS FOR ITS SPELL

IN 1911 and 1912, I spent some great days in Algeria, and Tunisia or the Regency. We have heard little of those countries during the last four or five years, except that they supplied fine fighting material to France. Algeria was the granary of Rome, and, like Tunisia, is full of Roman culture to this day. There are many places in the Atlas where you can scarcely dig into a yard of soil without striking against Roman pottery or building. But the Atlas is destined, I believe, through its perfect spring and winter climate, and through the yet undeveloped wealth of its soil, to a far greater future under France than it knew under Rome. Each day one spends as a traveller in Atlas, whether in a city, such as Algiers, or on a mountain, or in the plain, is spent in a country of magic. We recognise that sometimes powerfully whilst there. We know it still better a few weeks after we have left, and are back in the fixed grooves, the ordinary atmosphere of life. This magic of the Atlas is found in almost anything ; it is in the common, widespread things we see there day by day. I knew this at once when I landed in North Africa. My first visit there was very short, and left upon me the idea of a vague, tantalising dream, little more. I thought the touch of the air on an early spring day was unlike anything I had felt before, a subtle touch, ethereal, making the rare zephyr touches of our North seem gross and hard. The African air is choicer, I think, than even the South Italian. Everything around us during that

short stay was under the spell. I thought later that the shortness of the visit might account for this ; that on a longer visit, the amazing must become the ordinary in North Africa, as elsewhere in the world. I thought wrongly. Now I know that every day and everywhere whilst I was in the country for five weeks in the following spring, Atlas was a world apart and to itself.

The spot least likely for this spell might seem to be the largest city in the country, the richest, most European, most civilised. Yet, it is far from absent even there. It is cheap to say that Algiers has been spoilt. We all say it after we have gone up to the mountains or down into the rim of that vast purple sea, the Desert. Above all, we may say it after we have seen something of the life of marvellous Tunis. It is the common cant about North Africa. I have said it to myself, and to others, more than once of Algiers. But Algiers is really only as all the Atlas is, if it has not quite so full a measure of beauty and of strangeness. Wealth is a part of the magic of Atlas. It is wealth heightened, as in Sicily, by poverty. It is part of the scheme of the world, I suppose, which Emerson thought out : " the inevitable dualism . . . so that each thing is a half, and suggests another thing to make it whole " : upper, under ; yea, nay ; rich, poor.

The wealth of Algiers is plain to see immediately one lands. Before the war, it was growing to be a hive of money-bees. There was a prophecy that Algiers was to be one of the three supreme cities of the earth ; and, at least, I doubt not it is to be very great in the future. Algiers grew, I think, in the night as well as day. I walked out after dark into the quarter of the town west of Place du Gouvernement, and the environs beyond on the night I first saw Algiers, and I found a new city, dazzling white and noble to see, swiftly uprising from nothing. Here from the squalor of to-day it is but a step to the splendour of to-morrow. How mean the environs and suburbs of the outer zone of London and other English cities, appear against the environs of Algiers, with their

rows of white stone houses, beautiful, if any building of a modern city can be so !

But it is not on that side of the city that one fully recognises its rise to splendour. It is to the east, on the hills of Mustapha, that the splendour of Algiers, the massive wealth of to-day and far greater of to-morrow are so clear to see. The hill at Naples, where the great hotels are clustered, strikes us, when we recall it, as far less splendid in this than Mustapha. True, it has a view of sea and land that is finer than Mustapha's. The Bay of Algiers is incomparably less than the Bay of Naples. It has nothing to rival Vesuvius at daybreak or sunset, or the grey and purple dreaming isle of Ischia. We scarcely recall what the Bay of Algiers is like, what are its features, after we have left it a little while. But if its view or panorama is ordinary Mediterranean, Mustapha Superieur is superb all the same. What strikes one on a bright winter or early spring day is the finish of the place. It has not, so far as I could see, one ugly spot, being compact of white villas set in grounds and gardens, all in perfect order. Suburbs are as a rule dispiriting places, no matter how orderly, and how obvious their signs of comfort or wealth. But I should say that Mustapha would be the least depressing place to live in. Here does seem to be something of that country-in-town life often advertised and aimed at in our modern cities, and always missed. The gardens and grounds of the villas in Mustapha *are* gardens and grounds. Now, I know of no modern city of England which has any real country-in-town. Mostly the garden of an English suburb is not a garden, but a place where, if you touch a tree, you are black as when you touch a chimney-stack.

Electric trams take one to and fro between Place du Gouvernement and Mustapha. I cannot recall, perhaps I never noticed, whether their system is overhead or underground. But it seems not in the least to matter so far as the spell of the place goes. A tram may spoil a city in the world of every day. I remember the outcry when a poor old blundering, horse-drawn tram was

let loose in the High at Oxford, and the feeling that it would ruin Oxford ; whilst in later years, Westminster Bridge and the Embankment were to suffer the same fate through the two-deckers there. But clearly, trams of the newest type can run through the streets of Faëry and yet not break their spell. I ventured once to protest against the Swiss Government allowing a long tunnel with pop-holes here and there to be bored up the Eiger, and a great climber and authority on the Alps took me to task. Perhaps he was right, and the Eiger and the Jungfrau are not hurt by trainloads of trippers being shot up and emptied out on their dazzling peaks, nor hurt by underground eating places on the route. The tram to Mustapha, and the remembrance that one took it with joy, suggest that.

Algiers is not only a beautiful city, a busy city, greatly rich—as its splendid villas show, and greatly poor—as its loathly and stinking slums and its ragged beggars show. It is Biblical. I do not say it is so Biblical as parts of the Aures Mountains and the Desert. They and their people appear to be the originals of those illustrated copies of the Bible, of the coloured scenes from the Old Testament which one knew in boyhood—books and prints often seen in thatched cottages of English hamlets and in ignorance made light of to-day. Still, Algiers is Biblical. The feeling of the Old Testament came back to me with force and fancy long forgotten, as I sat at the window of the hotel and looked out on palms in a row at the Place du Gouvernement, and on that mystery of human figures crowded beneath. We could sit there and watch the scene for hours at a stretch, the wonder of it not growing less.

We went away from Algiers for a week or more, and saw Biblical scenes in the mountains round Hammam Rhira—the pitcher at the well, the ass saddled, the cavalcade of thousands of years ago, the black tents, tents of Kedah—yet, returning for a few days, we could sit at the window again, and watch with childlike wonder that scene in Algiers.

In the mountains and on the lowlier plains one rubs

shoulders with the life of two thousand years ago. There, often for many miles together, and for hours together, it is all the very old. But here in Algiers, at the hub of its whirling French life, we rub shoulders at once with the very old and the very new.

It seems absurd to sit at a window and look down idly for hours at a throng of white-cloaked and burnoused men sauntering up and down—with that saunter which marks the true Arab for a king, though often he is a beggar—mixed up with the throng of the West ; and not less absurd to follow with a curious eye the movement of the pathetic veiled women, some of them in dirty bloomers, all in hideous bloomers. But I feel that if I went to Algiers again, I should sit idly at the window again and look down like a little child on that dream—drama of old and new.

I should miss again this sight, and that which determined tourists who go to Algiers make a point of seeing. I did not see what every determined tourist who “ does ” Algiers must see—the Kasba by moonlight. I brought away no clear idea of the plan of the Kasba—only such an idea as one gets by wandering at random in its dark, mazy alleys and its brilliant, crowded fruit market and bazaars. Yet after all, to “ do ” a strange city is not to know it. The master-key to unlock the secret doors is not in the keeping of any guide ; and though at times we must use guides here, as in Italy, for hard or perilous places, guides in the flesh even more than guides in the book, I had rather roam at my own will than be marched at the bidding of another’s.

It is better on the sentimental journey to go at the free lead of fancy than on the chains of fact.

I think I could never come nearer Solomon than under Zaccar in the Western Atlas. There is “ the Mountain of Myrrh ”—the vineyards, the aloes, the cyprus, the fig tree, and the pleasant fruits, beds of spices, and all delightful things of the Song of Songs !

Algeria is prayer, too ; perhaps it is prayer before anything. In every busy street of an Atlas town, whether

Algeria or the Regency, is the inevitable shop, French or native, selling the inevitable four-coloured postcards of four positions at prayer. They face you on the hall table or on the office counter of every hotel from Algiers to Biskra, from Biskra to Constantine, from Constantine to Tunis. Go out into the Desert—the same postcard finds you. At the Desert town of Sidi-Okba it is there on the stall and in the shop. I doubt not it has reached Touggourt and the mud huts of Ouargla. I suspect it to be a common article of merchandise among those fierce wanderers, the Touaregs, of whom the guides tell such strange stories. Should you, by chance, anywhere miss the prayer on the postcard, you will meet it on the photograph. Who has been to North Africa and does not know the famous portrait of the camel, the rolling, ribbed sand dunes, and the Arab lying down in prayer? Probably, their prayer was greater than the war, far greater, all through the great struggle.

The prayer is everywhere. The prayer is Algeria. You meet with it on the postcards first, later you begin to get used to it in the flesh; but you only *begin* to get used—for there is something about this act which forbids familiarity. It is always worth the West's while to look at the East in prayer. There is about the act a tremendous ritual of nature in the scrub and dunes of the desert, or even in those delectable mountains to the west of Algiers. I first saw it in late February on the hillside at Hammam Rhira. It was that strange season in North Africa, when the air is full of the scent of the hawthorn, whilst the wild clematis, full-leaved, is still in unripe seed; and the grey chaffinch has not begun to build, though the white cistus is flowering, and the scarce swallowtail butterfly is on the wing.

The flight of that swallowtail butterfly over the asphodel's brimming blossom is one of the loveliest sights in the world of wings. It expresses buoyancy and lightness as scarcely the feat of the Arctic skua in winter off the coast of Sicily, or of the black-headed gull in the gale over the Cornish cliff, expresses them; for,

though the swallowtail can control the air in a moderate breeze in those African hills, it is lighter than air. It can rise and drop in the asphodel ; it can start backward as well as forward ; it can float and glide and tower with the nonchalant ease of a creature not terrestrial at all, celestial. The swallowtail named Machaon, that was busy at Pompeii, is a near cousin to this scarce swallowtail, but I had not imagined a butterfly's kinship with the air till I met with it in the asphodel fields of Africa.

The sun burns fiercely on those mountains. But it is peculiar to the North African sun for five months in the year that nothing seems to faint in the fierceness. The heat is tempered by the dryness, in the mountains it is often tempered by a breeze. Thus, through the hottest afternoons a dozen kinds of birds, which a few days of July heat in England silence, sing without pause from the cistus and acacia and brooms on the Hammam Rhira hillsides.

The climate of the Atlas is near perfection. I think if I were asked to put in three words the things, *carnal* things, that this great French empire—for it is an empire, though France be a republic—excels in, I should say, climate, colour and cookery. The question of cookery is always with us. We cannot ignore it. Man does live in some degree by cookery ; the most spiritual of men and women cannot overlook this wholly. It is the custom of the French in Algeria and the Regency, I think, to eat too much, or, at any rate, to offer you too much to eat. Two meat dinners of several courses a day make a dinner too many. But the French throughout the country show a nicety in the way they make and serve their dishes which we do not find in England. Here, cookery is an occupation—there it is an art. After one has grown accustomed to the petit pois and the pommes de terre of Algeria, the large coarse peas and potatoes of England seem only fit for the pig trough. The chipped, knifey bits of discoloured lettuce we name salad here have no likeness to the salad of France in Africa. The same is true of the sweetmeats and of

the fresh, fragrant fruit. They curiously study and understand this fine art in the Atlas.

I own to a disappointment about the forests of Atlas. The Aleppo pine and the tree heath tire one—they are so endless. I do not believe in the panthers that are said to lurk among those pines. I doubt even the lynx. They may still linger here and there in the highest and remotest of the mountain forests in the country, but the panther of the Western Atlas is dead as the lion of Algiers ; there are too many orange fields and vineyards for such noble game. The jackal, the red fox, the spotted hyaena, and the wild boar are the utmost fauna of a tree heath and Aleppo pine forest. But in the hill-side jungles of Hamman Rhira and all that country is real Africa if anywhere on the north coast. Hammam means hot-water spring ; and wherever these springs gurggle up and trickle into the deep valleys, there are dense thickets of shrubs and reeds and creepers. The reeds grow 20 feet high in the swampy spots, and nearly all things, save the reeds and the grasses that thrive there, wear a thorn. The clematis adds a wicked prickly to the tip of its leaf. The mimosas and the broom and a score of other trees and lesser plants arm themselves against some foe that does not appear. Press into one of these savage thickets to search for a bird's-nest, or stretch out a hand to pick a flower or seed, and a dozen hooks have hold of you. And then the tangle of the creepers—most of them armed to the leaf like the rest—in these jungles ! Everything seizing, binding, squeezing out of all form something else, and itself seized and made prisoner and bound. How gentle is the grip and inoffensive the occasional armour of our English hedgelings compared with those barbarians of North Africa ! There seems to be a fell personality about the jungle of the Atlas—a beautiful, sinister spirit lying in wait for some unwary traveller.

A long day's railway journey takes you from Algiers to Biskra. Half the world talked of going to Biskra before the war. It will go there for health, and it will go there for colour and legerdemain. When I talked

over an itinerary in North Africa with a friend before starting, I said I had heard Biskra was not a place to spend much time at. Had it not been quite vulgarised, Europeanised, and spoilt? But he taught me that such a place as Biskra, concentrating all the feeling and old, old tradition of the East, and with the Desert its intimate neighbour, could not really be vulgarised. He taught me right. We hear too much about the vulgarising of cities and places remote or ancient. The vulgarity is often only of the surface, affecting what is superficial in ourselves, the fastidious part of us, the paltriest or most pedantic part. If ever the railway is run right across Sahara, from Biskra to Touggourt and on to Ouargla, and still further, and even if it brings with it hoardings, with advertisements of chocolate and beef-juice and drugs, and refreshment buffets at the very heart of the Desert, Sahara will not be vulgarised. Sahara is greater than these things, greater and older ten million times and years. The Sahara could no more be vulgarised by a beanfeast than the Pacific by an excursion boat.

Still less can such places be hackneyed by writers. The Sphinx—how infinitely less it is than Sahara! Yet, who can hackney the Sphinx?

So it is with Biskra. Do not hesitate to go to Biskra because it is advertised; because its Ouled Nâil dancers have been over exploited and are worthless; because it has lavish hotels, a railway, camel-races Europeanised largely, and smart horse-races with a betting ring. It has these things, as Touggourt, I suppose, and dream-like Sidi-Okba and Oumache must have them in future; Biskra has, too, a scum of humanity, rising always and bubbling like foul gases at the surface. But nature remains great around Biskra, and the place is rich in colour and fire, and in the phantasmagory of native life.

The spell of Africa will outlive the American twang and the European tripper. It will outlive in Biskra—even in Europeanised New Biskra—the last word in false romance and sickly sentiment. Do not think of going to the Atlas without going to Biskra. It is Biskra,

not El Kantara, that is the key to the Desert. El Kantara is good of its kind. It has the first of the oases, and surely one of the fairest of the oases, when the peach-blossom is showered among its palms. The little French settlement at the Gorge, with its homely and hospitable inn of the Bertrands, is an idyll. But El Kantara is only the outer gateway to the Desert. The inner door is further south, and the key that unlocks it is Biskra.

I remember a good deal about Biskra. I remember, I must say, the comfort and cooking of the little French Hotel Du Sahara. Do not believe the superstition that one "must go to the best hotels" in the Atlas. The best hotels may be good, but so are many of the little ones, which the alleged American millionaire has not entered, his trunks being too big. The small French hotels of the Atlas are clean, kind, homely. I remember at Biskra, too, the first sight of the racing and running camel, Mehari, "Ship of the Desert"; and those sorrowful, weary troops, the camels of burden that do not race—a sight on which I hardly dare to dwell, for Islam is a devil to the doomed, dyspeptic creature by which in Africa it lives and moves and almost has its being.

But two or three little things stand out to-day in my memory of New Biskra more vividly than aught else in what is somewhat of a sink of humanity, yet in air and sky and palm an Eden. I remember the first swallow of Sahara, and how it glittered on a glittering copper-wire by the Boulevard Carnot in the glittering air of that glorious day. Now, that expresses Biskra. What a sky and air—what a sheen through all the morning and all the afternoon!

It cools at Biskra by five o'clock, but it seems to be never really evening in the desert—at least, never twilight. There is no middle zone, half light, half shade. There is a long day at Biskra, and then night swiftly follows, so that the butterflies of Biskra fly till the very edge of night, and no doubt are often caught by the dark.

I think it impossible to exaggerate the splendour of the day scenes at Biskra, the sheen of it all, the intense

lustrousness of Sahara blue, the obscure purple of the Desert, and the irresistible idea that Desert gives one of a sea whose shores are the sand-dunes beyond Vieux Biskra. But I think it possible to exaggerate the night scene. The stars of Orion and the great topaz Aldebaran did not seem to me to burn much brighter in that Desert sky than I have seen them burn over England ; and I have seen night blues over England as wonderful as those over Biskra.

The camel is the beast of burden for the Desert, but the camel has a rival in Atlas. The rival is called a Khabyle. He does the camel's share of work, and, for his size, I believe he does the share of more than one camel. I saw him toiling for France in the docks of Algiers, I saw him in the mountain vineyards, but not till I reached Biskra did I realise his inhuman power of endurance. And, think of it—the Khabyle is an Arab, though the Arab's true nature is to sit or saunter in the sun, croon little melodies, smoke endless cigarettes, stare softly at whosoever passes. Surely the Khabyle has fallen from Islam and the faith ? His East must be turning West. Sitting in the shade of the Jardin Public at Biskra, I looked up and saw three bundles of rags approaching, each bundle topped by a swaying mass many times larger and heavier than itself. The rags were Khabyles, though, until seen quite close, they bore no likeness to human beings. The back of each was bent double. They carried Atlas. The first tried to trot as a Khabyle does under a heavy burden ; the second—they moved in Indian file—half-walked, half-lurched along ; the third staggered. I watched them, fascinated. They stopped at some signal from the leader, and the awful weights slid off them. They straightened up thereat, and disclosed three undoubted men, marvellously ragged, wiry, strong men, though spindle-legged. A short rest and the first Khabyle took the burden of the third ; the other two hefted it on to his back, whilst he leant against a tree and rolled from side to side. At first the burden would not go on, and when they got it up, it rolled off, and by another

agonising effort had to be replaced on the bent back. At length it was on, and its bearer staggered off with it. Then the third Khabylye contrived to get the medium burden on to the bent back of his fellow. I wondered whether they would both drop and roll in the dust in the effort ; but the tree supported them, and presently the second Khabylye was started ; and he half-walked, half-rolled after the first.

And now remained only the third, who was to carry the light-weight—a light-weight equal, I guessed, to a couple of English sacks of wheat. How, without aid, would he heft it on to his back ? The friendly tree was there, but the loaders were gone. It seemed as if, though his weight was far lighter than the others, he *must* fail to raise and keep it up. He reeled ; he fought with the burden ; and after a few baulked efforts he had it up, and was off. This third Khabylye, who had lately staggered under the heaviest load, now trotted under the least heavy load, soon gaining on and leading his fellows.

There you have the Khabylye ; and the Khabylye is colonisation in that part of the world. Watching that weight-carrying feat in Biskra, I realised the grand material the French have in their work of making the Atlas one of the greatest colonies in the world. And do not heed past figures, or past pessimists—now that France has Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, in a solid block, and can make them one, Atlas must become a great and splendid colony and commonwealth.

Turning from Biskra to Vieux Biskra, this the original village is commonly represented as a beautiful, wondrous place. It is wondrous, but it is the wonder of degradation and death that marks the whole of the human side of a perishing village. Of course, it is full of colour and sheen—for it is Africa and the Desert. As there are two or three little things which I recall vividly of New Biskra, so there are two or three little things I always see when I think of this Old Biskra. As the glittering swallow sitting on the glittering wire is a little touch in nature, I shall always remember

about New Biskra, the Egyptian turtle-dove among the palms is the unforgettable touch of bird beauty in Old Biskra. How it shone with a rare burnish as it flitted, tame and unconcerned at my approach, out of the flowering date-palms ! These painted, glistening doves seem the birds above all for the oases and the high-painted Scriptural hills of the Desert. That bird flew close to a little mud and sand field in the midst of the palms, a field where Arab and nigger children had been at play, sticking little bits of rough stones and slabs into the barren ground. That was the next thing that struck me after the burnished doves among the Bible palms of Vieux Biskra ; and I found out that I was right in taking it for a child's playground. It is indeed a make-belief. The poor little stones, ungraven, ruder than flaked flints of the men of the gravel drift, are tomb-stones ; and this is the grave-yard of the people who live their life in death in the foul mud huts of Vieux Biskra. All tomb-stones are make-believes after the grass has grown round about them for a few years ; but where, with Western civilisation, they are the make-believes of men and women, in Vieux Biskra they are the make-believes of a sort of larger children. All grave-yards are pathetic ; the huge city of clay and the little plot at the thatched cottage village that takes the English sunshine and rain ; but I never saw one more pathetic than these childish Arab ones. They are like cemeteries for dolls or dogs.

The housing of the dead African of Vieux Biskra is on the lines of the housing of the live African there. " See, my friend," exclaimed our worthy fellow-traveller to me as we drove down the chief street of Vieux Biskra, and saw one of the doors open, and a man lying in bed, " Why, I would not give my dog at home a bed like that."

The bed he pointed at was of the ordinary Vieux Biskra type—a solid block of hard-caked mud raised about two feet off the uneven floor of caked mud. Its sheets and bedspreads were mud, and mud its pillow. Yet, this particular house that held the bed was slightly

above the Vieux Biskra average. It had a door that opened and closed, whereas most houses in Vieux Biskra have no door. It had a roof, whereas the average hut is open to the sky.

Vieux Biskra is dying—there can be no doubt about that. But it may take time for all its inhabitants to scatter or join their friends in the Arab-burying-place ; for the air and sun of their land must be an elixir of life that is ever warding off disease and death. As one drives down the road of glorious, rotten Vieux Biskra, the beggars gather and pursue and continually increase. The driver curses them, strikes vicious blows at them with his whip ; will sometimes even stop, get off his box, and collect pebbles to fling at them if they come again within range. Still they pursue, whimpering, whining, screaming, smiling, scowling, blessing, cursing, for largesse. They will pursue the whole length of the rotten highway of Vieux Biskra on the chance of a single copper being flung at them. The faces of these urchins—it must be admitted, the men and women of Vieux Biskra, on the whole, stand aloof, or at least do not run and shriek for largesse—are mostly faces of perfect health and high animal spirit. The huts and hovels of Vieux Biskra are without sign or system of health ; but cannot the sun make all things pure, and is not the sun master of all in the desert and in the oasis ?

The sun is mightier in the desert than the very sand. It is the sun that keeps Vieux Biskra alive, and, in its intense shine and light, nearly all things can be made wholesome. The mud hovels of Vieux Biskra—at least the outsides of them, and, where there are no doors and no roof, even the insides—are made wholesome by the sun, and by the delicate air. Those filthy, polluted drains, the saggias which water the palms and make the oasis, become in the power of that sun wholesome and life-giving streams. No flowing water could be more contemptible to look at than the dirty ditches flowing through mud and sand, than these waters at Vieux Biskra, at Sidi-Okba, and at El Kantara past the Gorge ; the streams that flow through the land of looms

at home are better to look at than the waters of North Africa. But the eye is all wrong ; these foul drains are the fair fountains of life. Without them there could be no corn, no dates. Biskra would be desolate as the North Pole, and as lifeless. To know the true worth of flowing water, the meanest trickle of it, one must see an oasis. Let all impurity flow there, make of it an open drain, it matters not—whilst it flows, it makes an Eden. There is a garden at Biskra, the Jardin Landon, named Garden of God. But every oasis is Garden of God ; and the garden owes all to the foul, fair stream.

Nobody ever exaggerated the colour and glory of nature round Vieux Biskra, the blazon and pageant of it all ! None of the pictures or picture-postcards give that colour and glory too high, though they may give it too crude. Where they fail is when they present the human scene. A lane in Vieux Biskra, as we are shown it in one of these picture or guide-book accounts, has human beings and houses with some charm for the eye and imagination, something curious and entertaining. Whereas there is really nothing to the eye but squalor and ruin and death in life.

Let us haste away, then, from this doomed village in Paradise, and take a last look at the Biskra of to-day, at New Biskra, before we leave. I spoke of the Khabyle Arab, and said he meant colonisation in North Africa—the Khabyle, the camel, the date, the grape, and first always the Khabyle. But in Biskra, old and new alike, one is never out of sight of that Arab, who means anything rather than colonisation. The Biskra Arab is a loafer. To live is, for him, to loaf. Looking from my window I saw three true Biskra Arabs—not a drop of base Khabyle blood in them—at work amidst some heaps of rubbish in a small enclosure of the garden of the barracks. Their business was to collect and wheel away for a short distance a mass of sticks and withered palm leaves, mixed up with logs of wood and a little brushwood, with some stones and dust. It was a job which, even in that sun, one active Englishman, or a gardener's boy, would easily do well in a morning.

An idle man, an idle boy, could hardly help doing it in a short day. The three Biskra Arabs took the entire day over the trifling, absurd job.

I left the window, went for a walk ; came back at lunch-time ; the Arabs were still idling over the work. I glanced over the wall at tea-time—still they were playing at work. They went on playing till near sunset, when the work got done in spite of the Arabs. There was something inexplicable in the way they spun it out, though a soldier came twice to superintend and urge them on. They crooned little songs, they squatted in the dust and sun, and covering up their mouths, after the way of the Arab in the Desert, they slipped into short dozes. They picked up little stick by little stick, and put trifling bundles into the wheelbarrow ; and having put a bundle in, they left off playing at work, and played at smoking cigarettes. In the end, the sticks were all collected and the logs were piled against the wall ; and, with the stimulus of an officer, a besom was fetched, and the dust swept up. The whole enclosure covered a space of about seven square yards, and the rubbish might have filled three English farm carts.

That is the true Biskra Arab, the non-European Arab ; stroller in the street, delectable idler of the coffee-stall, squatter on the road outside the mosque. The European Arab, the hotel Arab, is quite another, on the surface, at least. Who would not be waited on at Biskra or elsewhere by a good specimen—and there are many good specimens—of this man ? His manners are perfect. He is quick, attentive. There is no suggestion of deep disdain for Western ways about this Arab. The good Arab waiter and the good Arab guide defer to you, but in such a way that you are not half ashamed of yourself in being deferred to. Servility is loathly. But in the good Arab guide or the good Arab waiter, no matter how much he defers to you, the thing is not unpleasant. He is a gentleman, and takes his tip at the close of his service like a gentleman.

There is a question I have asked myself often about these European Arabs, of the higher stamp, and I have

put the question to those who have long lived in the country and know the people well—if West can know East. Should the revolution, of which men talk much in Tunis, in Tripoli and Algiers, come in earnest, and a great rising, would these men go with their kin? Would they strike the hand that fosters them? Those who are in daily touch with the Arabs at Biskra and elsewhere, and have been so for years or all their lives, who speak the language, and should be in the secret if any can be, say that one Arab in this is all the Arabs. They tell me that in the Holy War against the Christian dog—be he Frenchman, Englishman, Italian—every Arab will *know*, he will not merely hope or think, that, if killed, he must go to the seventh heaven. An Arab may lie by the tomb of the Prophet, he may break all the commands of the Koran. It matters not—he *Believes*. So every Arab is to rise when the day comes. The good guides to rise with the evil. The Souks in Tunis, who desire a revolution and Holy War as much as a Piccadilly or Regent-street tradesman desires the rule of syndicalist—the very Souks, they tell me, must rise!

That is the story; and in Biskra as elsewhere, all seem to tell it alike. Yet, I cannot credit it. One must make a few exceptions. The man who brought our petit dejourner at El Kantara; the guide who steered us through that marvellous, strange quarter, the quarter of the public women at Tunis, the unveiled East by moonlight—it is not to be believed that Arabs such as these will go into the Holy War in which every dog of a Christian must be struck down. Better to serve on a very good earth than reign in a highly problematic seventh heaven must surely tell with some, despite the Prophet.

Besides, who can quite believe that an Arab who looks a gentleman, and in all ways behaves to you as one, an Arab who whips and stones away beggars and pests, brings you good bread and coffee and dates, and attends you kindly and carefully—that such a man is going to rise with the revolutionists and cut you down? I don't believe it. After all, the West has Believed, in

its time. It has had its inquisitions and fires at Smithfield, and through it all, at the reddest and hottest, there has been humanity. I do not believe that our waiter at El Kantara would rise against us and cut us down. The *petit déjeuner* habit would be too strong for the Prophet, to say nothing of kindness and humanity. I doubt whether all the Souks would rise.

To go to Biskra is to go on to Sidi-Okba. It is but a few hours' drive from Biskra. At Sidi-Okba, the sacred city, nothing seems to have been exploited, at Biskra most things have been exploited. The dance and the sham jewellery of the Ouled Nâil women have been exploited. Do not Americans cross the Atlantic and go down to the Desert to see the Ouled Nâil? I never saw the dance at Biskra, it is not worth seeing. But I saw some of the dancers, and that was enough—hideous creatures, daubed with crude paint.

Sidi-Okba is pure Islam. We pass through fire to reach it. The March sun blazed so hot during our drive to it that I had to put a very heavy ulster over my knees and legs to shield them. We passed mirages to reach Islam, which was appropriate. A mile or two across the dry pebbles of the river by Biskra we saw four of these mirages over the saltpetre sands and scrub of Sahara. This is absolute Desert. I cannot reconcile myself to the geography or the geology that named the mountainous wastes between El Kantara and Biskra the Desert. On the sand-dunes beyond Vieux Biskra, and on the road to the sacred city that lies in that dim oasis on the horizon, is real Sahara. Seen from a height anywhere in the Aures or at Biskra itself, the Desert gives me the idea of some vast and undiscovered sea; only it is more illimitable, more mysterious than the sea, and it has not the freshness of the sea—it is a dead sea.

Looking back from the ribbed, rolling sand-dunes beyond Vieux Biskra, away from that oppressive, alluring immensity, I saw the vivid green of the rye crops, and beyond this the rose and purple of Bible mountains

—rose kindling into red in places. I saw the palm trees clipped out on Sahara's blue sky.

So that is the way to the sacred city; and it is a marvellous road and scene. I could not exalt Algiers or Constantine after Sidi-Okba; whilst, returning to Biskra, I was back into to-day. We must travel a long way from Sidi-Okba before we can begin to marvel again. I had to travel as far as the native quarter of Tunis and Carthage, and the village of Sidi Bou-Said to do so.

In the sacred city, city of the oldest mosque in Algeria, city beyond all cities in Africa of the Koran and of Mahomet, the men seem to match the very flies in thickness. The streets are packed with Arabs buying, selling, smoking cigarettes—ever cigarettes, the first necessary of an Arab's life—squatting round the stalls, sauntering up and down; above all, gossiping. It is the business of a true Arab to smoke, saunter and gossip away his life; and at Sidi-Okba men do understand this business; I think they may even know it better than in the Place du Gouvernement, Algiers, or at the corner of the Rue d'Eglise in Tunis. What can they find to talk of all the days of the year? There cannot be many fresh topics in the sacred city; that very tall date-palm, which we were shown with a childish importance at every point of view, can hardly now be a subject of living interest among people who have known it all their days. But, topic or not, the talk never ceases. It goes on all day like the buzz of the Desert's flies. Doubtless they are talking to-day as I write: and of some theme infinitely more important to them than the world war.

Sidi-Okba is a University town, and the Koran is studied and learnt by heart, or learnt parrot-wise, in the precincts of the Mosque. So that some of these groups of endless talkers may be among the higher critics of Islam holding

great argument
About it and about.

In the Mosque itself one finds no critics, only the weird, rushing chant of the Koran being learnt word for word by the initiates. They are huddled in the corners, even at the foot of the dark passage that leads to the minaret top, where the marvel of Sidi-Okba does indeed culminate. That is a view worth crossing a continent and an ocean to enjoy for even a few minutes.

The poet dreamed he saw Eternity face to face one night. One sees the image of Infinity from the muezzin-tower ; the mighty bowl of Heaven coming down to the clean-cut rim, and resting on the mighty purple Desert ; with below, for just a little way around, the poor cluster of mean mud and sand huts, and the scrap of palm and corn green—

A little while of you and me,
And then no more of you and me.

CHAPTER XIV

CIRCE AT TUNIS

No one can be said to know a city who has not seen something of its night side. I take it this is true of all cities ; of the native quarters of Tunis it is absolutely so. There are two Tunises, a French and a native. The night side of the first seems to me much like that of Marseilles, only not so roaring. But, then, can any city match Marseilles for noise ? I have lain in bed at Marseilles on Sunday night, in an hotel in the Rue de Noailles, and suffered for hours—till broad day on Monday morning. The place outbabels Babel. For hours ceaselessly the uproar in the streets, the terrible chatter, go on ; and the unending trams, and the piercing voice of the drivers have beaten into me, dented me, hurt bodily. Do they, these Marseilles people, I have wondered, ever go to rest ? The French Tunis is not so loud as that ; it is ordinary French, not more. But true Tunis, native Tunis, is not French by day or night. The pessimist cannot say that Tunis of the Souks by day, Tunis of the public women, the dancers, the singers by night, is spoilt by civilization and American tourists. It defies the civilizer, the tourist, the whole vulgar world of the West.

To visit the native night Tunis, you must have a guide. You might stroll about the place without one and yet not be stabbed, or robbed, but it would not be a good experiment, because in any case you would see little of the life. We held out obstinately on our second visit to Tunis against a silky, smooth-gliding Arab, who beset

us for several days, but at length we gave in and engaged him. Then he bore us off in triumph, and his conduct was perfect. Quite a small coin satisfied him. The man was a gentleman. He had the bearing of an aristocrat. He took us first to a concert, to see a little of the East unveiled, and to hear its melody. The concert and dances of the Ould Näil or public women at New Biskra I had refused to attend. The women were hideous, their jewelry was imitation. Besides, that show is arranged largely to tickle credulous tourists who cross oceans to see it. But in Tunis—and I suppose in Constantine, too, though I missed them there—we can see the dances and hear the songs meant for the Arab voluptuaries. It is a true part of the night life of this wondrous city, a place more Eastern, it is said, than the East.

Our silky friend took us up a street half European, half native, into a drinking and smoking saloon they name a *café*, where for an hour or two we could have the song and dance that appeal to the imagination of the young and middle-aged Araby. This *café* was a large room with tables and chairs scattered about, at which lounged Arabs with a few Jews and Italians. They drank so-called Turkish coffee, a sweet, insipid, disgusting thing. The audience was quiet and well behaved, much better behaved than many a London music-hall audience. Rowdiness seems no habit of the Arabs of Tunisia or Algeria, except on certain occasions, as after the camel race from Touggourt to Biskra, when the scum of the place boils up, and there is a wild yelling scene in the streets, gun-powder spitting and rifle cracking. That is absurdly described in guide books as a "fantasia." Actually it is a nasty, risky outbreak of brutishness by all the riff-raff of the place.

The poorer Arabs sat at the back of the room. Young men, mostly of the upper and rich classes, filled the front seats. In a row in the stage sat the six dancers and singers of the evening with their band. There was a Greek woman, an Arab or two, the rest were Jewesses. They were veiless and wore bloomers. The Jewesses,

picked women, were immensely fat. One of them was about equal in bulk to two good-sized women : I never saw a woman so fat. She must have weighed over twenty stone. The Greek was the only woman who had the slightest claim to refinement, as we see it in the West. Where the charm of the Jewesses lay in fat, fold upon fold, roll upon roll, of fat, the Greek's charm was in her voice. Not only the audience but the performers followed her songs with curious interest, subtle admiration. Even the bandmaster smiled and praised her. Her song was a kind of squeal, reminding one somewhat of the cry uttered by the full-feathered young cuckoo which appears to mimic the united efforts of a whole nestful of chicks, and by this device completely dominates its foster parents. The Jewesses and the Arabs squealed after the same fashion, but there must have been some delicate *nuance* about the Greek's squeal absent in theirs, for they did not fascinate the audience. Between and amid the squealings came the stomach dances. These consisted in amazing writhings and contortions of the stomach—a frightful grimace of the whole body. The fat Jewess stomach dancing is beyond the power of language. The muscles must be wrought to a rare strength for these dances. You see them working, through the dancer's apology for clothes. It may be frightful, but it is fascinating ; and all the actions of arm, head and leg going with it are grotesque to watch. The Western eye cannot distinguish between the niceties of this and that dancer. But the Arab eye judges finely : that is clear to understand, through the flattering regard which the movements of one woman win as against another less expert.

In the front row sits a handsome, very effeminate young Arab, richly dressed. He smiles and nods to the fat Jewesses, and to the Greek woman. He has in his hand a little bunch of choice freezias which constantly he raises to his nostrils. It is the Arab exquisite ; the voluptuary in every gesture. The type is common to other lands, but here we see it to physical perfection. It is the soul of stefanotis.

Looking round the café, after the stomach dance and song have begun to pall a little, one sees the keeper of the place—a Maltese, who looks the very man to stab you for a franc or two. But the most startling thing in the café—the thing which is constantly drawing one's eyes from the voluptuaries of the front row, from the murderous-looking Maltese, from the Greek and the Jewess—stirs not the faintest interest in the Arab audience. It is the figure of an immense elderly woman, who may be a Jewess, or a cross between Maltese and Jewess or Arab. It sits on a privileged seat against the stage, and sucks at a pipe with a long flexible stem. Its face is vermillion. It has been itself in the public line in its day, in the squealing and dancing art. This hag might put to rout the very witches and Macbeth himself. It is the last possibility in repulsiveness, and could not walk in London streets without being accompanied by a yelling mob. The Duchess of "Alice in Wonderland" would be a less astounding figure in any public place in the West. Yet, here in night Tunis, it passes without remark, without the faintest sign of Arab interest. The hag slips into ecstatic little drunken dozes, and wakes up to complain that the pipe is out and needs refilling, whereupon an Arab boy recharges the bowl with a peculiar kind of choice Turkish tobacco and rekindles it. And the hag sucks again. It is the proud mother of two of the beauties on the stage, who are just coming out in the boneless dance. At the table with the vermillion hag sits the only native or professional woman present, whom we of the West should describe as beautiful: a pale, very dark girl, scarcely twenty, silent and sullen. She is an initiate certainly. But she speaks to no one, and no one to her. By and by, this dark beauty, too, may become the cynosure of a Tunis café. She may thrive, and live to retire, herself a vermillion duchess, given to the drowsy joy of the pipe.

The concert and dance went on and on without the least sign of close before midnight. We left it at length, and the guide threaded his way through a labyrinth

of narrow lanes, lit only by the stars, which globed themselves that night in their deep, lustrous, God-like blue. Presently we came out of the sinister lanes and passages into a street lit by candles as well as stars. We were in the midst of the veilless East now, the domain of the oldest profession on earth. Here were the public women of Tunis. At the lintel of every house, whose door lay wide open, on both sides of the streets, sat Circe, laughing low, crooning little love lyrics. Her love beacon, stuck by a drop or two of grease to the stone pavement, or to the wood of the lintel, guttered and flickered a little to the night air. Through the door wide open you saw a plain, even mean room, carpetless, with a chair or two, a bed. The effect of the thing was phantasmal and strange beyond anything uttered by gaping trippers concerning the Ouled Nail of Algeria. Over us was a supreme glory of infinite worlds flashing out of a blue deeper, I believe, than that of Capri itself—one of the two things which filled the philosopher with astonishment, “the starry realms above and the moral law within.” That night in Tunis I think the great stars did really burn intenser than I have ever seen them from a Northern country; intenser than steely Vega or Sirius pulsing through the frosty atmosphere of a great English mid-winter night. Then below, and all around us, in the ebon blackness, the scene of the flickering, little love beacons, and the figures of the sirens, some of them beautiful, sitting at their doorways or lounging just within their mean rooms, decked in their muslin wraps and barbaric ornaments. The whole spectacle remains bitten out on the memory.

We passed down the street, entered the Jewish quarter, and soon reached the West again, the ordinary French Tunis. What land can be more veilless than the East unveiled? It is a mart, open, unabashed, void of any semblance of hypocrisy—the hypocrisy of the West. However we view it, whatever the ethics of the thing may be, let us not cheat ourselves with the insolent notion that here is an ill which can be put away by Western rule, a habit to be extirpated by Western education. That is crude

ignorance. The West in its conceit, might as well take on itself the task of extirpating all the mosques and muezzins of Islam. To go to war with the strong, ancient customs of these people argues in the reformer an amazing want of imagination and of humour. Government—European Government—can succeed in taxing natives like these Arabs to the verge of starvation, possibly beyond the verge. I have seen taxed natives, who, to be frank, have no observable advantage over the beasts and birds in their food and raiment and dwelling places. In their low, black tents, with their bundles of rags and scraps of wretched food, some of these people seem to me beneath the foxes and fowls. Government, too, might, I imagine, catch the children young and educate them. It may use them for beasts of burden—indeed, what is the Khabyle but that? It may drill them into soldiers and policemen; I have had good accounts of the native policemen in the Atlas. But Government must end at these reforms. It is Government gone mad if it touches the Koran or Mahomet; if it touches the veil. Where all the rest is but superficial—base food, base coin, base lodging and base soil of Islam—these other things are rooted in the deeps and fastnesses of its old, unchanging life and character. Only evil can come to Government that strikes at the hand on this locked door of Islam.

Go to Tunis last of all, after Algiers, Hammam Rhira, Biskra, Sidi Okba, Constantine. Drive to Carthage repeatedly, see the Museum there each time you go, and see the Museum too at Tunis, which has some Greek bronzes equal at least to anything in Palermo or Naples. But, above all, be guided through the haunts of Circe on a God-like April night in the wondrous city of Tunis

CHAPTER XV

TRAVELLING DAYS : TO THE ALPS FOR THEIR FLORA.

TRAVEL abroad, like travel through English countryside, for me has always included an interest in wild life, the flora and fauna. Always where landscape or where field sport, often where architecture and the human scene, are one's chief object in travel, opportunities offer for some study of wild life, which aesthetically and intellectually can add much to one's pleasure. There are people who think that, if you begin to look out for birds, you must miss the men : therein is the kind of intolerance which will not allow that fancy and fact can cohabit the same mind, and which utterly dissociates art from science, the picturesque from the practical. I think that if they could have listened for a while to Roosevelt, about the biggest and least overbearing talker I ever met, they might modify that stupid view. Or they should go to another practical American, and ask Ford how, with his passion for birds, he came to concentrate on tractors. Nature does not take us away from man, any more than books take us away from him, unless we grow into bookworms. On the contrary, nature helps to quicken a man's understanding of the human side, and to widen his survey. But, no doubt, when you go to a country new to you, simply to devote yourself to nature, the human side will be overlooked. I went to Switzerland one year late in the summer simply and solely to see Alpine flora in its mighty setting,

mountain and miniature ; and I admit that, as a result, anything in Switzerland bored me (if I did not completely overlook it) but mountains with their gentians, and harebells, and other exquisite little Alpine families.

Everyone told me when I went out to Valais early in August that I was too late for the Alpine flowers ; and August is too late if one wishes to see the pageant of pattern and colour spread all over the meadows of the lower and upper Alps. From what I saw in the Jura, Valais and Bernese Oberland pastures and mountain sides, there was nothing of that kind left. The pageant ended with June or early July. But the colour and pattern of the Alpine flora is one side alone of the charm. Flower colour can only be fully enjoyed when presented in a sheet or blaze, and flower pattern can only be fully enjoyed when it is presented in carpets of blossom and bud. Then one enjoys the flower collectively.

There is another side, however, the individual side, where one looks into and values the flower apart from effect or show of colour and pattern ; and I am not sure this is the lesser value. August is not too late for the enjoyment of Alpine flowers individually, at any height between, say, five and eight thousand feet ; and there are, at least, a few plants which in their higher pastures and paths only begin to blossom fully towards the close of summer. Every day in Switzerland I saw a fresh kind of plant in flower, and, making a rough list, I found that I had seen at least something in most of the chief Alpine families. The soldanella I missed, and though some of the primulas were still in flower no doubt in the higher spots, I saw none of them ; but there were campanulas and gentians, and species of androsace, linaria, achillea, geum, viola, sempervivum, silene, aster, saxifrage, and celastium. Some of these flower far into the autumn : it is a list that comprises some of the loveliest forms of miniature flower life and form.

If June is the month to enjoy the Alpine flora in its mass, August may be the time to enjoy this flora in its miniature. It is much the same in Alpine heights as in English coppices. During spring and early summer,

we are too engrossed in the flower mass to get full enjoyment out of the flower miniature. The immense spread and display of colour and pattern will not be denied our full attention ; it is with the gentians and primulas and saxifrages of the Alps as with the carpets of bugle and bluebell and speedwells in English May woods.

The first thing that appealed to me in the Jura was the Alpine pasture. I never saw anything like it. I have seen nothing in Norway like it, nor in the north of England, nor Scotland, nor Wales. The Alpine pasture is a miniature, like the true Alpine plant. It is a miniature shown by the million—also like the true Alpine plant. It was burnt up by the long summer drought when I saw it in the Jura, and yet it seems to have some gift of perpetual freshness. One walks through patches of dry, brown flower and grass stems, and despairs of finding another Alpine flower in full blossom. But look closer into this wilted stuff and soon you will find a faint magenta or lilac tinge—the Autumn crocus has just thrust through the turf beneath. You have no sooner found the first crocus than you find crocus everywhere. For one crocus in the rough dry herbage, there are hundreds in the pastures where grass has been cropped close or in meadows where the hay has been made.

But the crocus was, to my eyes, scarcely an essential Alpine ; nor was the grass of Parnassus, which was still in full flower at five and six thousand feet in the mountains, nor blue salvia of the meadows (and everywhere among the Alps) nor arnica, with its large orange yellow flowers, at 7,000 ft. near the highest greasy patches ; nor the orange red flowers of *crepis aurea*, a sort of hawk-head that loves high mountains. The true, unmistakable Alpine is cast in miniature. What one expects in an Alpine plant, in its leaf, still more in its flower, is a complete contrast with environment. The mightier the mountain, the more midget should its inhabitant be.

The best of all these Alpines seems to me to be the most miniature. The miniature flora of the English chalk downs appears to me in like manner. The tiny

bell blossoms of the mill mountain, or cathartic flax, are never so beautiful as when they grow on the turf of the rolling English chalk downs. I do not know that even the Alps have a thing more exquisite than mill mountain of English downland; but then, for one miniature plant which we have at home, Switzerland has scores. We cannot match the Alps in miniature any more than we can match them in mass.

There is another appealing contrast besides that between mightiness and minuteness—the contrast between roughness and delicacy. It seems as if the higher we mount, the refiner the flower grows, because the rocks are starker and the air is rougher. The finest of all these Alpine plants desire the poorest, thinnest soil.

Wealth and refinement rarely go together in nature. The flower is often a greedy feeder. But it is otherwise with the essential Alpine. Saxifrage, linaria, androsace, with gentian and harebell are all for chastity. Some prefer the clean and barren rock, others the lightest of soil. At a full 8,000 feet by the path to the glacier, I found the Alpine toadflax flowering on a slope of flinty debris, where there seemed no soil at all. I do not say it is lovelier than one or two little members of the family that thrive on English walls or in English cornfields, but its loose racemes of small violet flower tipped with orange, are in brilliant contrast with those rough, slatey-looking stones, and it is Alpine of the Alpine. At this height, most of the robuster and coarser kind of mountain flora gives way to the miniatures.

A patch of thin grass under a rock, a patch a yard square, was an Alpine garden in itself, perfect and compact; its two gems were made of blue, a speedwell, whose kind I could not determine, and, mingled with it, the little Alpine forget-me-not, one of the fairest of Alpine miniatures. That was near the spot where the grass ended in this wild mountain pass, but a hundred yards lower was a far larger patch of grass among rocks, that in June must have been more blue than green, thanks to Bavarian gentian, which has an azure deeper

surely than any sky-blue. Even in August the late or second crop of gentian thinly sprinkled here and there in the turf was worth a long, rough walk to see. What a blue this gentian is dyed with ! There may be a deeper, but the eye could not recognise it. The only way I could imagine a deeper tint was to imagine more of these Bavarian gentians ; I could not increase it by quality, only by quantity.

In such a spot the Alpine aster, with its mauve flowers, gold centred, passed almost unnoticed ; these wanted—like arnica and yellow-red crepis and sullen monkshood and the very golden geum of the mountains, which all grew on this grass slope—the delicacy and refinement of the diminutives. The saxifrages, one and all, are Alpine out and out, but August, even at this height, in an air iced by the glacier, was late for saxifrage after a fierce summer. The opposite-leaved saxifrage with its compact foliage and its bold rose purple flowers was all but over ; and the aizoon—with stiff little rosette of leaves, toothed and tiny, and each with a minute pinprick at the edge—was passing. However, *celastium latifolium*—as if so narrow a thing could have a broad leaf—still flowered freely at seven thousand feet on the rocks and among the stone chinks : and there was something far minuter than *celastium* in blossom—diminutive of diminutives, with a long name. This was *androsace chamoejasme*, a native of America as well as of the Alps. I found *chamoejasme* was not more than four inches tall, and its stem was crowned by a tiny head of white or rose tinted blossoms, each with a bright yellow throat. It would make up well with our own mill mountain into a Lilliputian bouquet—save that the Lilliputians were somewhat too large perhaps for *androsace*.

The flora of the Alps taught me this paradox in plants—a perfect harebell need not be slender, and a perfect harebell can even be stocky. Our home harebell on the wayside turf stands for all that is frail and slender. Is not its stem a thread, and its blossom the shaving of a petal, and does it not represent refinement in flower

form to a point past which refinement cannot go? Harebell would serve well as a synonym for refinement or for perfect grace of build. I remember reading a description of two village girls, one of whom in her delicate beauty was likened to the harebell, whilst the other answered to the rank beauty of scilla, the coppice bluebell; and though, no doubt, compared with most forms of life, the bluebell is refined enough, when set beside a harebell it appears almost rank and thick. The harebell by comparison coarsens almost any flower of its own stature. But in the Alps—especially, I found, in the Bernese Oberland—a harebell can be thickened and a harebell can be shortened, and yet remain true harebell. In the Alps, first in the Valais and then in the Oberland, I found three harebells in full flower. The botanist styles them not harebells, but *campanulas*. However, setting strict flower science aside in this, I prefer to style them, for my purpose, harebells. Some *canpanulas* of the Alps and of England could not possibly be called harebells. There is, for example, a towering, robust *campanula* growing in English wood-lanes in July and August, the nettle-leaved bell-flower, that is in nowise harebell, and there are plants of the same build in the Swiss flora. But here were three Alpine harebells flowering in the Oberland at five or six thousand feet above the sea—*barbata*, *pulsilla*, and *rhomboidalis*.

The last of these, I believe, is sometimes a sheet of colour in the meadows, a blue lustre of it. It is, save for its leaves, like a large English harebell, if its tint is a little stronger. *Rhomboidalis* is a bolder-looking flower than ours; perhaps it might be valued by some people as a more handsome, a more showy plant; but, on the whole, I think it is not quite so distinguished as our harebell in the quality of refinement and grace of bearing and build. So much for *rhomboidalis*—it neither emphasises nor disclaims this harebell quality. With *barbata* and with *pulsilla* it is otherwise. *Barbata* is exquisite. It is true harebell, out and out; yet, *barbata*, compared with our plant, is almost stout

in build. True, it bends to the breeze, after the English harebell's way ; and it grows in the same kind of spot—loving the short and crisp turf among the hills and by the roadsides—but its stem is not hair-fine, and the petals of its pale blue are not so thin as those of our plant. Yet, despite these differences, which might seem essential, *barbata* appealed to me as pure harebell.

It is one of the choicest flowers that I have seen in the Alps ; it must be one of the choicest in nature. The tint of its blue is so rare and precious—the palest of azures. I saw the great white peak of the Eiger set against just such an azure one evening in the Oberland.

The third of these Alpine harebells, in full flower at 7,000 feet, had all the grace of our own, and its tint was the English tint ; but it was a squat flower. I saw it, at one high spot in the Valais, with pure white blossoms—a rarity. But in the mountains of the Bernese Oberland it was far more plentiful. In one place I found many companies of *pulsilla* growing in the turf, or even in the chinks of the naked rock along a glacier watercourse, which slid and tinkled down the steep mountain side. The steep grass slope after rain was too slippery for me to climb with comfort, so for hours I scrambled up and down the stony watercourse. I saw little companies of *pulsilla*. In some spots I found a company covering a bit of grass or rock a yard or so square, and the blossoms were so thick, they jostled one another. A yard of ground was painted blue by *pulsilla*. Sometimes the stems that held the blossoms were not over two inches high. Now, imagine our own harebell on a stumpy little stem like this, and it seems forthwith to lose its harebell quality and charm. Yet, here is *pulsilla*, true harebell, flowering on a stumpy stem, and none the less harebell perfection.

Pulsilla made the best flower company which I saw in the Alps in August. To find it growing on Alpine heights at its best is to despair of artificial rock gardens. The natural, the real rock garden is not to be mimicked. The true rock garden is in nature ; it can never be in

art, though we may play at rock gardening at home. We can get the rock, and we can persuade the flower to grow—even to thrive. But it ends there. The setting is wholly wanting—the mountain height, the huge chaos and might of the rocks, the steep grassy slopes, the glacier stream, the distant view of fearful fields of ice and snow.

By the high mountain stream, where *pulsilla* grew in compact companies, I found other true Alpines. Besides *geum*, *celastium*, and the *sempervivums*, there were still a few yellow violas at the water edge, one of the two or three wild pansies of the Alps. *Viola lutea* differs wholly from *pulsilla* or *barbata* in its appeal to us. Its beauty is the beauty of expression. A harebell has not expression; a wild pansy is all expression. It has a face and features, and in this reminds me closely of a tiny flower blossoming at 5,000 feet or more in the cropped Alpine meadow yellow eyebright. This eyebright—like all the species of eyebright or *euphrasia*—is full of expression. It may not be strictly an Alpine, but it goes perfectly with such gems of the mountain as *androsace* and *silene acaulis*, the cushion pink.

The Alpine *linaria* clambered among the stoniest parts of this mountain stream, just as I found it amidst flinty debris in the Valais; whilst lower down, at six thousand feet or so, where the stream entered an Alpine pasture, there were large companies of a dwarf rose-bay willow-herb; whether it was really a dwarf variety of the rose-bay, or a distant species, I could not tell, but it was almost exactly like our English plant in all save height.

Again, there was a large composite called *Adenostyles alpina*, which I found in ragged blossom all up the mountain water course. Even at seven thousand feet or more it throws up a stem several feet high. Under its ample-kidney-shaped leaves I found many seedlings of one of the Alpine *primulas* hidden from the sun, and here, too, out of sight, the yellow viola was blossoming late. If *Adenostyles* can thus thrive in these stony,

stormy places on a long stem, why could not a thistle thrive? And indeed, at least, one Alpine thistle with a good-sized stem did thrive there, the many spined *cirsium*.

With these examples of stem in storm before me, I grew less trustful of the theory that *pulsilla* has shortened its stem and *acaule* dropped it altogether that they may flourish in and defy the rudest weather. Did *pulsilla*, I wondered, start with a longer stem—the usual harebell stem—and had *acaule*, the rough thistle that lies flat on the turf, a stem at all to start with? As to the evolution of the *saxifrages* and *androsaces* and minute *cresses* and *silenes* that prefer the high, sometimes almost the highest, places, they were chaste feeders, perhaps, at the start through necessity; in their mountain fastnesses, as exiles possibly, they were forced to live on next to nothing or to die out.

Two Alpines which I had a fancy to see, I missed. One of these may be gem of all gems, the dwarf forget-me-not, *eritrichium*, which will blossom at the edge of the snow like a *soldanella*; the other, some rose or purple *primula*. But I was too late for nearly all the *primulas*, whilst *eritrichium*, dwarf forget-me-not, is thinly spread through the Alps, a fastidious little thing like the lilac dwarf gentian. Yet, making a list of the Alpines I did see, I found they covered two pages of writing paper; in June, I suppose, they might cover nearer ten than two.

.

I end this book of memories with these minute forms of Alpine life. To some minds they may seem the very essence of the trivial today, after a mighty world struggle of five years which is going to change and reconstruct human society; for only the blind and thoughtless can fail to perceive that such a change and reconstruction are an absolutely logical result of 1914-1918. But I do not take the view that it is trivial, or a waste of time and observation, to consider and examine even the minutest, most exquisite Alpine to-day. My

conviction is that we are in danger of wasting time and thought to-day on infinitely less valuable, upraising and enduring things than these—on the froth and giddy rubbish that, perhaps inevitably, have come lately as a result of reaction after great strain. These Alpines take us straight to Nature—there is our best chance of rebuilding on a sound basis the old shattered and largely spent system of human society.

THE END.

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

DA
577
D48

Dewar, George Albemarle Bertie
A younger son



